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A Compendium of Catechetical Instruction

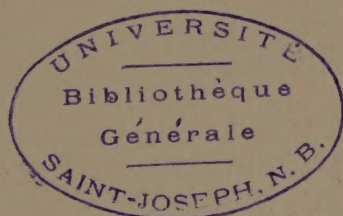
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THE SACRAMENTS

Part I



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THE SACRAMENTS

CHAPTER I

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

1.—A knowledge of the sacraments necessary to the pastor.

EVERY part of the Christian Doctrine assuredly claims the pastor's knowledge and attention. But the discipline of the sacraments, which are so strictly commanded by God, and so fertile in the graces of salvation, demands his special skill and care in order that on the one hand the faithful may, through his diligent and careful instructions, be fitted for the worthy and saving reception of those high and holy gifts, and on the other hand that he himself may be faithful to the rule laid down in the divine prohibition: *Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine.*¹

I.—EXPLANATION OF THE WORD SACRAMENT

2.—The word sacrament means (1) an oath.

As we are to treat of the sacraments in general, we must first of all begin with the force and meaning of the word itself, and point out its various significations, so that the precise meaning attached to it in this place may be clearly understood. The faithful then should be informed that the word sacrament, in so far as it concerns our present purpose, has been used in one sense by sacred and in another by profane writers. By the word sacrament some authors would express the obligation that arises when we are bound by oath to the performance of some service. Hence it is that the oath

¹ Matt. vii. 6.

under which soldiers bind themselves to faithfully serve the state was called a "military sacrament"—a meaning that seems to have been very general amongst the writers in question.

But amongst the Latin Fathers who have written on divine things, the word sacrament denotes some holy thing lying concealed; while to express the same meaning the Greeks used the word mystery. It is in this sense we understand the word to be used in the Epistle to the Ephesians: *That He might make known unto us the mystery of His will*;¹ and to Timothy: *Great is the mystery of piety*;² and also in the Book of Wisdom: *They knew not the secrets of God*.³ In these and in many other places it will be observed that the word sacrament signifies simply a sacred thing hidden and secret.

Now, the Latin Doctors considered that certain visible signs, which produce grace as well as representing it and putting it before the eyes, might properly be called sacraments. Though at the same time they may, as St. Gregory considered, be called sacraments for this reason, that under the veil of sensible things they contain a divine power which secretly accomplishes salvation.

It must not, however, be imagined that the word is of recent introduction into the Church. Readers of St. Jerome and St. Augustine will easily see that, to designate the matter under discussion, the ancient writers on our religion over and over again make use of the word sacrament, and, at times, the term symbol, or mystical sign, or sacred sign.

So much regarding the word sacrament, which indeed applies also to the sacraments of the Old Law. On these, however, there will be no need for the pastor to dwell, since they have been superseded by the law and grace of the Gospel.

II.—DEFINITION OF A SACRAMENT

But as well as the meaning of the word which, up to this, we have been explaining, the nature and efficacy of the *thing* signified must be also carefully examined, and the faithful shown what a sacrament is. That the sacraments are to be in-

4.—A sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing.

¹ Eph. i. 9.

² 1 Tim., iii. 16.

³ Wisdom ii. 22.

cluded amongst that class of things through which salvation and justice are obtained is beyond doubt. But though there are many definitions well fitted and calculated to explain this point, yet there is none which puts it so fully and clearly as the definition given by St. Augustine, and adopted by all scholastic Doctors since his day: "A sacrament," he states, "is a sign of a sacred thing," or, as it has been expressed in other words which, however, come to the same thing: "A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace instituted for our justification."

In order that this definition may be understood as clearly as possible, its several parts should be explained by the pastor. And first of all he should teach that all sensible objects are of two kinds. Some have been invented precisely to serve as signs; others have been established not for the sake of denoting something else, but for their own sakes alone.

Amongst the latter class may be reckoned almost all objects in nature. But to the former class are to be ascribed words, writing, standards, images, trumpets, and many other similar things. If you deprive words of their power of expressing a meaning, the reason for their institution seems to disappear also. These, then, are properly called signs, since, as St. Augustine declares: "That is a sign which, besides that which it presents to the senses, enables us to come to the knowledge of something else; for example, from a footstep which we see imprinted on the ground we at once know that some one whose footstep appears has passed that way."

This being understood, it will be clear that a sacrament is classified amongst those things that have been instituted for the purpose of denoting a meaning. By means of a certain appearance and resemblance it makes known to us that effect which God, by His power, works in our souls, though that power cannot be perceived by the senses. To illustrate this by an example: in Baptism, the outward washing with water, accompanied by certain solemn words, signifies this that, by the power of the Holy Ghost, all the filth and defilement of sin is washed away and our souls become enriched and adorned by the glorious gift of heavenly justice; while, at the same time, that washing of the body, as will be

5.—A sign is something instituted to denote some other thing.

6.—A sacrament is to be classed amongst signs.

explained in the proper place, accomplishes in the soul exactly that which it signifies.

7.—Proved from Sacred Scripture. That a sacrament is to be classified amongst signs is clear from Sacred Scripture. In his Epistle to the Romans concerning circumcision, which was a sacrament of the Old Law, and which was given to Abraham, the father of all believers, the Apostle writes thus: *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the justice of the faith.*¹ And when he affirms elsewhere that *all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death,*² it is lawful to conclude that Baptism signifies this—signifies, as the same Apostle says, that *we are buried together with Him by baptism into death.*³

It will be of no small advantage to the faithful to know that the sacraments are signs. They will be thus more easily convinced that what they signify, contain, and effect, is sacred and august; and, conscious of their holiness, they will be the more readily induced to worship and venerate the goodness of God towards us.

8.—A sacrament not a natural sign. It is now necessary to explain the words “of a sacred thing,” which is the other part of the definition. To do this properly, the acute and subtle remarks of St. Augustine on the various classes of signs must be touched on at some length.

Some signs are called *natural*, because, along with making themselves known to us, they also beget in our minds the knowledge of something else (which, as has been already shown, is common to all signs); for example, smoke, at the sight of which we at once recognize the presence of fire. Now, this sign is called *natural* for this reason, that smoke does not imply fire merely owing to an act of the will; but daily experience teaches that at the mere sight of smoke a person will conclude that there is present there also the nature and power of fire, even though we do not see it.

Nor a sign invented by man. Certain other signs there are which are not natural, but invented and agreed on by men for the purpose of enabling them to converse with one another, and convey to one another the thoughts of their minds and mutually understand the thoughts and opinions of another. How many and varied are

¹ Rom. iv. 11.

² Rom. vi. 3.

³ Rom. vi. 4.

these signs may be gathered from the fact that some of them are established in connexion with the eyes, many with the hearing, and the rest with the other senses. Thus, when we desire to point out anything to anyone and, for example, do so by hoisting a flag, it is sufficiently evident that the meaning is conveyed through the sight; in like manner the sound of trumpets, lutes and lyres which is produced not only to afford pleasure, but frequently too is made use of to convey meaning, belongs to the judgment of the ears. It is by this sense that words which have the greatest power of expressing the inward thoughts of the mind are principally conveyed.

9.—But established by God. But besides these signs which, as we have said, have been established by the will and consent of man, there are certain other signs, and these admittedly of more than one class, which have been given by God. Of these some have been given by God to men for the one special purpose of signifying or admonishing. Such were the purifications of the Law, the unleavened bread, and many other details of Mosaic worship.¹ But God has appointed others which have the power not only to signify, but to accomplish. In this class must manifestly be reckoned the sacraments of the New Law. For they are signs which were given by God, not invented by man, and which we firmly believe contain in themselves the power of producing the sacred effects which they signify.

10.—Meaning of the word "sacred thing." There is, as we have shown, a great variety of signs; in like manner, also, the "sacred thing" referred to must not be imagined to be of only one kind. With reference to the definition of a sacrament already given, writers on sacred subjects understand "sacred thing" to mean the grace of God which makes us holy and adorns us with the habit of all the divine virtues. They justly considered that the special appellation, "holy thing," should be given to grace, by means of which the soul is consecrated and united to God.

11.—Fuller definition of sacrament. For the sake of greater accuracy and clearness it should be pointed out that a sacrament is a thing subject to the senses which, through the decree of God, possesses the power both to

¹ Lev. xii.; Ex. xii. 15.

signify and accomplish sanctity and righteousness. From this it follows, as may be easily seen, that images of the saints, crosses and the like, though signs of sacred things, are not, on that account, to be regarded as sacraments. It will be easy to prove the truth of this definition by showing that in all the sacraments, as may be easily verified, there is a sensible thing, which at one and the same time signifies and produces grace, as we have already observed regarding Baptism, wherein we saw that the solemn ablution of the body signifies and, at the same time, produces a sacred effect which is accomplished inwardly by the power of the Holy Ghost.

III.—WHAT THE SACRAMENTS SIGNIFY

12.—The sacraments signify more than one thing. Furthermore, it is highly in keeping with the nature of these mystical signs that by God's decree they signify not one thing alone, but many several things at once. This may be seen in all the sacraments which show forth not only our sanctification and justification, but two other things also intimately connected with that sanctification—the passion of Christ our Redeemer which is the cause of sanctity, and life everlasting, and the bliss of heaven to which our sanctification should be referred as to its end. Now, as this is found verified in all the sacraments, rightly have the holy Doctors taught that every sacrament has in it a threefold power of signifying—it brings to remembrance something already past; it indicates and denotes something present; and it foretells something yet to come. Nor are we to suppose that this was taught by them without any foundation in Holy Writ; for when the Apostle writes: *All who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death,*¹ he makes it clear that Baptism is to be counted a sign because it puts us in mind of the passion and death of our Lord. Furthermore, when he says: *We are buried together with Him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life,*² it is clear from his words that Baptism is a sign by which it is shown that heavenly grace is poured into our souls enabling us to lead a new life, and easily and cheerfully perform the offices of true piety. Finally, when he adds: *If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, in like manner we shall be of His*

¹ Rom. vi. 3.

² Rom. vi. 4.

resurrection,¹ it is evident that Baptism also furnishes no obscure indication of eternal life which we are to attain thereby.

Besides these various classes and modes of signifying which we have enumerated, it often happens that a sacrament denotes and marks the presence of not one thing alone but of more things than one. This is easily understood by those who reflect on the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, wherein is signified the presence of the true body and blood of Christ as well as the grace which those who approach it with purity of heart receive.

From all this, then, reasons cannot be wanting to pastors to show what wondrous power of God, and how many hidden miracles are contained in the sacraments of the New Law; and thus they may be enabled to convince all the faithful to reverence and receive them with the greatest devotion.

IV.—WHY THE SACRAMENTS WERE INSTITUTED

14.—Causes of the institution of the sacraments :
(a) To increase our faith.

Nothing appears better calculated to teach the true use of the sacraments than to diligently explain the reasons why they were instituted. Several are enumerated.

Of these the first is the weakness of the human mind, which we know to be so constituted by nature, that no one can aspire to a knowledge of things within the range of the mind and intelligence except through the medium of those things which are perceived through one or other of the senses. To enable us, then, to more easily understand the effects wrought by the hidden power of God, that same Supreme Maker of all things has, in His good will towards us, most wisely ordained to manifest that very power through the medium of certain sensible signs. As has been admirably said by St. John Chrysostom : "If man were but free from the conjunction of a body, those good gifts would have been presented naked and covered by no veil ; but because the soul is joined to the body, it was altogether necessary to use the help of sensible things in order to understand them."

¹ Rom. vi. 5.

(b) To confirm
our hope.

The second reason is that our mind is not easily induced to believe in mere promises. And therefore God, from the very beginning of the world, has been wont to indicate His will by words and that frequently; but occasionally—when He designed some work the magnitude of which might weaken faith in His promise—He annexed to His words other signs which frequently had a miraculous appearance. Thus, when God sent Moses to liberate the people of Israel, and when Moses, distrusting the aid even of God who had sent him, feared that a heavier burthen than he could bear was being laid on him, or that the people would not lend a ready ear to the divine oracles and words, the Lord confirmed His promise by many signs.¹ Just, then, as in the Old Testament, God willed to testify to the truth of some great promise, so also in the New Law Christ our Saviour in promising us forgiveness of sins, heavenly grace, the communication of the Holy Ghost, instituted certain sensible and visible signs to serve as pledges of the obligations contracted by Him, and leave us no room for doubt that He would be faithful to His promises.

(c) To afford a
remedy to the
soul.

A third reason was, according to the words of St. Ambrose, in order that the sacraments should be available as remedies and as the medicine afforded by the Samaritan in the Gospel, to restore or preserve the health of the soul. The power that springs from the passion of Christ—that is, grace which He merited for us on the altar of the cross—must, to reach our souls, pass through the sacraments as through a channel. There could be no hope of salvation for anyone in any other way. And therefore our most merciful Lord deigned to leave in His Church sacraments guaranteed by His word and promise, and by means of which we may rest fully assured beyond all shadow of doubt that the fruit of His passion is truly communicated to us, provided only that each one of us piously and religiously applies that remedy to himself.

(d) To be a bond
of union
among the
faithful.

There is also a fourth cause why the institution of the sacraments seems necessary, and it is that they might serve as notes and symbols to distinguish the faithful from all others; particularly since, as St. Augustine observes, “there can be no society of men belonging to any religion, true or false, who can be, so to say, consolidated into one body unless they

¹ Ex. iii.

are bound together by some bond of visible signs." Both these do the sacraments of the New Law accomplish—they distinguish Christians from infidels and bind the faithful together by a sort of holy bond.

(e) To enable us to profess our faith.

In addition to these reasons, it may be pointed out that another very just motive for the institution of the sacraments may be found in the words of St. Paul : *With the heart we believe unto justice ; but, with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation,*¹ for by the sacraments we show we openly profess our faith and make it known before all men. Thus in receiving Baptism we openly testify our belief that, by virtue of the water with which we are washed in that sacrament, a spiritual cleansing is accomplished in our souls.

(f) Excite charity.

In the next place the sacraments possess great power not only to kindle and excite faith in our souls, but also to inflame us with that charity with which we should love one another, remembering that through communion of those holy mysteries we are bound together in the closest bond and are made members of one body.

(g) To increase our humility.

Lastly, and what is of the highest importance in the study of Christian piety, the sacraments tame and repress the pride of the human mind, and render us humble by forcing us to submit ourselves to sensible objects in obedience to God, from whom we had impiously fallen away, and turned to serve the elements of this world.

Summary.

These, then, are chief points that seem necessary to be laid before the people regarding the name, nature, and institution of a sacrament. And when they have been carefully explained by the pastor, it will be his duty to show the constituents or parts of each sacrament, as also what rites and ceremonies should accompany their administration.

V.—MATTER AND FORM OF THE SACRAMENTS

15.—A sacrament consists of matter and form.

In the first place, then, it should be explained that the *visible thing* which is found in the definition of a sacrament given above, is not one only, even though it must be held to constitute but one sign. There are two things from which

¹ Rom. x. 10.

each sacrament is made up—one having the nature of *matter*, and is called the *element*; the other having the functions of *form*, is commonly called the *word*. Such is the teaching of the Fathers; and on this subject the words of St. Augustine are well known and familiar to all: “The *word* is joined to the *element*, and a sacrament is the result.” By the words *sensible thing*, then, the Fathers understand both the *matter* or the *element*—such, for example, as water in Baptism, chrism in Confirmation, oil in Extreme Unction, all of which fall under the sense of seeing, and the words of which constitute the *form* and fall under the sense of hearing. Both these the Apostle clearly pointed out when he says: *Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life.*¹ In this passage both the matter and form of the sacrament are clearly indicated.

16.—Why words
are used.

Words are to be added to the matter to render the meaning of the element employed fuller and clearer. Of all signs, words evidently are the most significant, and if there were no words in the case in question it would necessarily be difficult to know what the matter of the sacrament signifies and declares. Thus, as may be seen in Baptism, water has the power of refreshing no less than of washing, and may well be a sign of both. Now, unless the words are also added, anyone might easily make it a matter for conjecture as to which of these two significations should be selected in Baptism—there certainly could be no attempt at certainty. But when the words are added, we at once see that it has the force and meaning of cleansing.

17.—Excellence of
the sacraments
of the New
Law.

Our sacraments far excel the sacraments of the Old Law in this, that in the administration of the latter there was, as far as we know, no definite form used—whence it arose that they were very uncertain and obscure. But our sacraments have so definite a form of words that if by chance it is departed from the nature of the sacrament can no longer subsist. Hence it is that they are as clear as possible and leave not the smallest room for doubt.

These, then, are the parts which appertain to the nature and substance of the sacraments, and of which each sacrament necessarily consists.

¹ Eph. v. 25, 26.

VI.—CEREMONIES USED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

- 18.—Certain ceremonies are used in the administration of the sacraments.

Along with the matter and form certain ceremonies are used which, though (unless in case of necessity) they cannot be omitted without sin, yet even if they are actually omitted they are not to be considered as lessening the validity of the sacrament for the simple reason that they do not affect its essence. And with good reason has it been always observed, even from the very infancy of the Church, that the sacraments were administered with certain solemn ceremonies.

In the first place it was highly becoming to surround the sacred mysteries of religion with such a form of reverence as to show that we handle holy things holily.

Moreover, the ceremonies more clearly display and, so to say, place before our eyes the effects of the sacraments, and impress more deeply on the minds of the faithful the sanctity of those sacred things.

Finally, they raise up the minds of the beholders and attentive observers to the contemplation of things sublime, and excite their faith and charity within them. This being the case, all the greater care and pains should be taken to bring home thoroughly to the minds of the people the meaning of the ceremonies that accompany the administration of each sacrament.

VII.—THE NUMBER OF THE SACRAMENTS

- 19.—The number of the sacraments.
- It is now our duty to explain the number of the sacraments, a knowledge of which point has this advantage that the greater the number of aids to salvation and life eternal the people know to have been prepared for us by God the greater will be the piety with which they will devote the powers of their souls to blessing and praising His singular goodness towards us.

- 20.—That number is seven: Why?
- The sacraments of the Catholic Church, as is proved from Scripture, handed down to us by the tradition of the Fathers, and witnessed by the authority of the Councils, are seven in number. Why they are neither more nor less may, with sufficient probability, be shown from the analogy that exists

between the natural and the spiritual life. Seven things are necessary to man to enable him to live, preserve his life and be of use to himself and to the public—to be born, to grow, to be nourished, to be healed when ill, strengthened when weak, and (concerning society at large) to have rulers to guide him by their power and authority, and finally to perpetuate both himself and his race by the lawful propagation of offspring. Now, as all these seem to correspond sufficiently to that life which the soul lives to God, the number of the sacraments will easily be deduced from them.

21.—Proved from
Sacred Scrip-
ture.

First, there is Baptism, which is the gate, so to say, of all the sacraments, and by which we are born again in Christ; next there is Confirmation, by virtue of which we grow and are increased in the grace of God—"To the Apostles who had already been baptized, our Lord," as St. Augustine notes, "said: *Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high*;"¹ then comes the Eucharist; by which as by a food truly heavenly our soul is nourished and sustained, and concerning which our Saviour has said: *My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed*;² in the fourth place comes Penance, by the help of which lost health is restored after the wounds inflicted by sin; next there is Extreme Unction, by which the remains of sin are taken away and the powers of the soul renewed, according to the testimony of St. James concerning this sacrament: *If he be in sins they shall be forgiven him*;³ then follows Orders, by which the power to publicly administer the sacraments and perform all other sacred functions in the Church is perpetuated; finally comes Matrimony, with this purpose, that, by the lawful and holy union of man and woman, children may be born and religiously brought up to the service of God and for the preservation of the human race.

22.—There was
not a like
necessity for
all the sacra-
ments.

It should, however, be particularly observed that, though all the sacraments contain a divine and wonderful power, yet all have not a like and equal necessity or dignity nor one and the same significance. Three of them are necessary beyond the rest, though not for an identical reason. Thus Baptism is necessary to everyone without exception, according to our Lord's declaration: *Unless a man be born again of water and*

¹ Luke xxiv. 49.

² John vi. 56.

³ James v. 15.

*the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ;*¹ while Penance is necessary to those alone who, after Baptism, have defiled themselves with mortal sin—they cannot escape eternal ruin unless they truly do penance for the sin committed. Orders also, though not necessary to each of the faithful, is, however, absolutely necessary to the Church in general.

If we consider the dignity of the sacraments the Eucharist far exceeds all the others in sanctity and in the number and greatness of its mysteries. These general remarks will be better understood when we come to explain, in the proper place, the characteristics of each sacrament.

VIII.—THE AUTHOR AND MINISTER OF THE SACRAMENTS

It now remains to see who it is from whom we have received these sacred and divine mysteries. Unquestionably the dignity of any great gift is very much enhanced by the dignity and worth of him from whom that gift comes. The question, however, presents little difficulty. For as it is God that justifies man, and as the sacraments are wonderful instruments for acquiring justification, it is evident that one and the same God in Christ must be acknowledged to be the Author both of justification and of the sacraments. Furthermore, the sacraments have such power and efficacy as to penetrate into the inmost soul, and as it is the property of God's power alone to penetrate the heart and mind of man, it is clear from this that the sacraments were instituted by God Himself through Christ. Along with this we must hold with firm and certain faith that they are inwardly dispensed by Him—St. John affirms that he had received this testimony from Jesus Christ Himself: *He who sent me to baptize with water* [the Precursor assures us] *said to me : He upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*²

Though God is the Author and Dispenser of the sacraments, He yet willed that they were to be administered in the Church not by angels, but by men ; and that the ministry of man is just as necessary to confer the sacraments as are matter and form is confirmed by the perpetual tradition of the Fathers.

23.—The Author of the sacraments is Christ.

24.—The sacraments are administered by men, not by angels.

¹ John iii. 5.

² John i. 33.

25.—The unworthiness of the minister does not impede the efficacy of the sacraments.

Now, as the ministers of the sacraments represent in that holy function, not their own person but the Person of Christ, for this very reason it is that be they good or be they bad, they validly perform and confer the sacraments, provided they use the matter and form which, by Christ's institution, the Church has always observed, and provided also they intend to do what the Church does in that administration. Hence, unless those who receive them wish to defraud themselves wilfully of so great a boon, and resist the Holy Spirit, nothing else can stand in the way of the grace that is the fruit of the sacraments. That this was always a fixed and certain doctrine in the Church is clearly proved by St. Augustine in his controversy with the Donatists. And if we require the testimony of Holy Writ, let us listen to the Apostle's words : *I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase.*¹ From this passage it is quite clear that just as the wickedness of those by whose hands trees have been planted does not injure the trees, so those who have been planted in Christ by the ministry of bad men can suffer no spiritual loss on account of the sins in which they have had no part. Hence, as the holy Fathers have taught us from St. John's Gospel, even Judas Iscariot baptized many, not one of whom do we read was baptized again ; thus, as St. Augustine wisely wrote : " Judas conferred baptism, and after Judas none were baptized whom he had baptized ; John baptized, and yet after John's baptism they were baptized again. For the baptism given by Judas was Christ's baptism ; but that given by John was John's own. Not that we prefer Judas to John, but we prefer the baptism of Christ, even though given by the hands of Judas, to John's baptism, even though given by the hands of John."

26.—It is a great crime to administer the sacraments with an unclean conscience.

Let not pastors, however, or other ministers of the sacraments on hearing this consider it sufficient to observe exactly the rules laid down for the correct administration of the sacraments, without paying any regard to integrity of life and purity of conscience. For although the administration of the sacraments must be carefully attended to, yet it is by no means all that is required in connexion with that

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

function. Pastors should always recollect that, while the sacraments never lose the divine virtue they contain, they yet bring eternal death and ruin to those who administer them with unclean hands. Holy things, as should be repeated over and over again and cannot be repeated too often, should be handled holily and reverently. *To the sinner*, says the prophet, *God hath said: Why dost thou declare My justices and take My covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hast hated discipline?*¹ Now, if it be unlawful for a man stained with sin to even speak on divine matters, how great is not the guilt of him who, conscious of many crimes, is yet not afraid to perform these sacred mysteries with polluted lips, or take into his foul hands, touch them, hold them forth and administer them to others?—particularly, as it is written by St. Denis, that it is not so much as permitted to the wicked to even touch the symbols (as he calls the sacraments). Let the ministers of holy things, then, first of all, strive after holiness, and approach with a pure heart to the administration of the sacraments; and let them so exercise themselves in piety that through the frequent handling and use of them they may, through God's help, attain a more abundant supply of grace every day.

IX.—EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENTS

27.—The effects
of the sacra-
ments.

All this being borne in mind, it should now be shown what are the effects of the sacraments—an instruction calculated to throw not a little light on the definition given above of a sacrament. The effects are chiefly two.

The effects are chiefly two.

(a) First effect—
justifying
grace.

Rightly does that grace hold first place which, according to the practice of the holy Fathers, we call *justifying*; and which the Apostle has most clearly referred to when he says: *Christ*

*loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word.*² But in what way so great and wonderful an effect is produced by the sacrament in the soul that, to use the words of St. Augustine, “water washes the body and touches the heart,”—this cannot be comprehended by human reason and intelligence. It may be taken for granted that of its own nature no sensible thing is endowed with such power as to be able to penetrate

¹ Ps. xlix. 16.

² Eph. v. 25, 26.

the soul. But by the light of faith we know that in the sacraments is the power of Almighty God, by help of which they effect that which natural things cannot by their own power accomplish.

28.—The reception of sacramental grace was in the infancy of the Church accompanied by miracles.

Lest any doubt as to this effect should remain in the minds of the faithful the most merciful God willed, when the sacraments first began to be administered, to show, by the evidence of miracles, the effects they inwardly accomplished in order that we might firmly believe that these effects, though far beyond our senses, are always inwardly produced. Passing over the fact, then, that on our Saviour being baptized in the Jordan, *the heavens were opened* and the Holy Ghost appeared *in the form of a dove*,¹ to show us that when we are washed in the saving fount His grace is poured into our souls—omitting this, since it pertains to the signification of Baptism rather than to the administration of the sacrament, do we not read that when on the day of Pentecost the Apostles received the Holy Ghost, by which they became thenceforth ready and courageous to preach the truth of faith and undergo many trials for Christ's glory, *suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, . . . and there appeared to them cloven tongues as it were of fire*?² Is it not clear from this that in the sacrament of Confirmation the same spirit is given to us and the same strength bestowed on us to enable us to resolutely encounter and resist the world, the flesh, and the devil—our perpetual enemies? As often as the Apostles administered these sacraments for some time in the beginning of the Church, these miracles were witnessed, until the faith having been confirmed and strengthened they began to cease.

29.—The sacraments of the Old Law did not confer grace.

From what we have now shown regarding the first effect of the sacraments—justifying grace—it will be abundantly clear that in the sacraments of the New Law there is a better and more excellent virtue than was possessed by the sacraments of the Old Law, which being *weak and poor elements*,³ *sanctified such as were defiled to the cleansing of the flesh*,⁴ not of the spirit. Hence they were instituted only as signs of what was to be accomplished in our mysteries. On the other hand the sacra-

¹ Matt. iii. 16.

² Acts. ii. 2, 3.

³ Gal. iv. 9.

⁴ Heb. ix. 13.

ments of the New Law, flowing from the side of Christ, *who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God,*¹ and thus by virtue of the blood of Christ work that grace which they signify. Hence if we compare them with the ancient sacraments, besides being more efficacious, they will be found to be much more profitable, holy, and august.

X.—THE CHARACTER IMPRINTED BY THREE SACRAMENTS

30.—The second effect—character—is found in only three sacraments. The second effect of the sacraments, which, however, is not common to all but peculiar to three—Baptism, Confirmation, and Orders—is the *character* they imprint on the soul. When the Apostle says: *He that hath anointed us is God, who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the spirit in our hearts,*² not obscurely does he by the word *sealed* describe a character the property of which is to seal and mark something.

Character is a mark impressed on the soul. Now this character is a certain mark which is impressed on the soul, and can never be blotted out nor destroyed. St. Augustine thus writes of it: "Shall the Christian sacraments be able to do less than the bodily mark wherewith a soldier is marked? That mark is not stamped anew on the soldier on his return to the army he had deserted; but the old mark is recognized and approved."

31.—Why a character is impressed. Now the character has two effects; it fits us to receive or perform something sacred, and distinguishes one man from another by some mark. Both these we acquire in the character of Baptism—we are qualified to receive the other sacraments, and the faithful are distinguished from the Gentiles who follow not the faith. The same may be noted in the characters of Confirmation and Orders—by the former we are armed and prepared as soldiers of Christ to make public profession and defence of His Name, and fight against the enemy, and *against spiritual powers of wickedness in high places*;³ and at the same time we are distinguished from those who are but newly baptized, and are, so to say, new-born infants; while the latter

¹ Heb. ix. 14.

² 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

³ Eph. vi. 12.

confers the power of consecrating and administering the sacraments, and at the same time distinguishes those who are endowed with this power from the rest of the faithful. We must therefore hold this rule of the Catholic Church, which teaches that these three sacraments imprint a character and are never to be repeated.

- 32.—Means to excite the people to venerate and frequent the sacraments. Such are the instructions to be given on the sacraments in general; and in their explanation pastors should zealously endeavour to accomplish two things principally—first, to let the people understand the great honour, respect, and veneration these divine and heavenly gifts deserve; the other, that as the sacraments have been designed by the most merciful God for the common salvation of all, to lead them to use them piously and religiously, and be so inflamed with the desire of Christian perfection as to consider it a great loss if they be deprived of the most salutary use of Penance and the Eucharist for any length of time. Pastors may easily accomplish these two objects if they often inculcate the explanation already given on the divinity and fruit of the sacraments:—*first*, that they were instituted by the Lord our Saviour, from whom nothing but what is all-perfect can come; *second*, that when they are being administered the most efficacious influence of the Holy Ghost is present pervading the inmost recesses of the heart; *third*, that they are endowed with a wonderful and sure power of healing souls, and that through them are derived the immense riches of the passion of our Lord; and, *finally*, let them show that the whole Christian edifice does indeed rest on the most firm foundation of a cornerstone, but that if not supported on every side by the preaching of the word of God, and by the use of the sacraments, it is greatly to be feared that it may, to a great extent, totter and fall to the ground. By the sacraments we are ushered into life—it is by this food, so to say, we are nourished, preserved, and increased.

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

I. NATURE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Q. What is treated of in the fourth part of the Christian Doctrine?

A. In the fourth part of the Christian Doctrine the sacraments are treated of.

Q. What is meant by the word sacrament?

A. By the word sacrament is meant a sensible and efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ to sanctify our souls.

Q. Why do you call the sacraments sensible and efficacious signs of grace?

A. I call the sacraments sensible and efficacious signs of grace because all the sacraments signify, by means of sensible things, the divine grace which they produce in our souls.

Q. Show by an example how the sacraments are sensible and efficacious signs of grace.

A. In Baptism the pouring of water on the head of the person, and the words: *I baptize thee*, that is, *I wash thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, are a sensible sign of that which Baptism accomplishes in the soul; for just as water washes the body, so in like manner

does the grace given in Baptism cleanse the soul from sin.

Q. How many sacraments are there, and how are they called?

A. The sacraments are seven—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

Q. What is necessary to make a sacrament?

A. To effect a sacrament it is necessary to have the matter, the form, and the minister who must have the intention to do what the Church does.

Q. What is the matter of the sacraments?

A. The matter of the sacraments is the sensible thing made use of in effecting the sacrament; such, for example, as natural water in Baptism; oil and balsam in Confirmation.

Q. What is the form of the sacraments?

A. The form of the sacraments is the words which are pronounced in order to effect the sacrament.

Q. Who is the minister of the sacraments?

A. The minister of the sacraments is the person who administers or confers the sacrament.

2. THE PRINCIPAL EFFECT OF THE SACRAMENTS, I.E., GRACE

Q. What is grace?

A. Grace is an inward and supernatural gift given to us without any merit of our own, but through the merits of Jesus Christ in order to gain eternal life.

Q. How is grace distinguished?

A. Grace is divided into *sanctifying* grace, which is also called *habitual* grace, and *actual* grace.

Q. What is sanctifying grace?

A. Sanctifying grace is a supernatural gift inherent in our soul, and rendering us just, adopted children of God and heirs to Paradise.

Q. How many kinds of sanctifying grace are there ?

A. Sanctifying grace is of two kinds—*first* grace and *second* grace.

Q. What is *first* grace ?

A. First grace is that by means of which one passes from the state of mortal sin to the state of justice.

Q. And what is *second* grace ?

A. Second grace is an increase of first grace.

Q. What is *actual* grace ?

A. Actual grace is a supernatural gift which enlightens the mind, moves and strengthens the will in order to enable us to do good and avoid evil.

Q. Can we resist the grace of God ?

A. Yes, we can resist the grace of God because it does not destroy our free will.

Q. By the aid of our own powers alone can we do anything available to life eternal ?

A. Without the help of the grace of God, and by our own powers alone, we cannot do anything helpful to life everlasting.

Q. How is grace given us by God ?

A. Grace is given us by God chiefly through the sacraments.

Q. Do the sacraments confer any other grace besides sanctifying grace ?

A. Besides sanctifying grace the sacraments also confer sacramental grace.

Q. What is sacramental grace ?

A. Sacramental grace consists in the right acquired in the reception of a sacrament, to have

at the proper time the actual graces necessary to fulfil the obligations arising from the sacrament received. Thus when we were baptized we received the right to have the grace to live a Christian life.

Q. Do the sacraments always confer grace on those who receive them ?

A. The sacraments always confer grace provided they are received with the necessary dispositions.

Q. Who gave to the sacraments the power of conferring grace ?

A. Jesus Christ by His passion and death gave to the sacraments the power of conferring grace.

Q. What sacraments confer *first* sanctifying grace ?

A. The sacraments which confer *first* sanctifying grace, and render us friends of God, are two—Baptism and Penance.

Q. How are these two sacraments called on that account ?

A. These two sacraments, Baptism and Penance, are on that account called *sacraments of the dead*, because they are instituted chiefly to restore to the life of grace the soul dead by sin.

Q. Which are the sacraments that increase grace in those who already possess it ?

A. The sacraments which increase grace in those who already possess it are the other five—Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony, all of which confer *second* grace.

Q. On this account how are they called ?

A. These five sacraments—Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony—are on that account called *sacraments of the living*, because those who receive them must be

free from mortal sin, that is, already alive through sanctifying grace.

Q. What sin does he commit who, conscious that he is not in a state of grace, receives one of the sacraments of the living?

A. He who, conscious that he is not in a state of grace, receives one of the sacraments of the living, commits a serious sacrilege.

Q. What sacraments are most necessary to salvation?

A. The sacraments most necessary to salvation are two—Baptism and Penance. Baptism is necessary to all, and Penance is necessary to all who have sinned mortally after Baptism.

Q. What is the greatest of all the sacraments?

A. The greatest of all the sacraments is the Eucharist, because it contains not only grace, but also Jesus Christ the Author of grace and of the sacraments.

3. THE CHARACTER IMPRESSED BY SOME OF THE SACRAMENTS

Q. What sacraments can be received only once?

A. The sacraments that can be received only once are three—Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

Q. Why can the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders be received only once?

A. The three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders can be received only once, because each of them imprints a *character*.

Q. What is the character that each of the three sacraments,

Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders imprints on the soul?

A. The character that each of the three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, imprints on the soul is a spiritual mark that is never effaced.

Q. What is the purpose of the character that these three sacraments impress on the soul?

A. The character that these three sacraments imprint on the soul, serves to mark us as members of Jesus Christ at Baptism, as His soldiers at Confirmation, and as His ministers at Holy Orders.

First Instruction on the Sacraments

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

HAVING already spoken of Faith and of the principal truths we are bound to believe, we now come to the consideration of those gifts we must receive in order to work out our sanctification and salvation. It is a subject of the most far-reaching importance, for, as the Council of Trent points out, the sacraments are nothing more or less than the channels through which the merits of the passion and death of our Saviour are communicated to us, and the theological virtues infused into our souls. Through their means grace is acquired, preserved, and strengthened, and through them it is restored when lost. "Through them (the sacraments) all justice either has its beginning, or, if begun, is increased, or, if lost, is restored."

It is, then, of the utmost importance to be well instructed on the nature and properties of the sacraments in order to be able to receive them properly. The scant and insufficient, not to say false and erroneous knowledge regarding them that is not unfrequently met with, and especially the ignorance of the dispositions requisite for their worthy reception, leads to their being often received with little or no fruit, and renders not only useless, but sometimes even hurtful, the very remedy prescribed by our Lord for our salvation.

Before speaking on the sacraments one by one I must first of all set forth a general idea of them, and draw attention briefly to various points common to all the sacraments.

The word *sacrament* is capable of various meanings; but the sense here attached to it is precisely this: a visible and outward sign instituted by Jesus Christ to signify and give grace.

To fully understand this, it is necessary to bear in mind that, in His wonderful providence, God has willed in all things to adapt religion to our nature and our needs. If, as St. John Chrysostom remarks, we were pure spirits and having no bodies, He would have established a purely spiritual religion for us; but being composed of a body and soul, depending in everything on the senses, and ordained to live together and to be united in the profession and exercise of one and the self-same worship, rendered necessary the aid of outward signs with which to incline our souls more readily to spiritual and heavenly things, and to afford to others a visible proof of the worship

we profess and thus become bound together in the bonds of one single religious worship.

Hence arise the splendour and magnificence of our churches and our altars; hence the imposing hierarchical order of popes, bishops, and priests; the majesty of our sacred functions; the pomp and frequency of our solemnities and festivals; the chants, the hymns, the numerous rites and venerable ceremonies of the Church—all exterior signs willed and prescribed by God Himself to stir up our faith, increase our piety, unite and bind the faithful together in one common bond.

And this is also the reason why God, instead of directly conferring His sanctifying grace, as He could easily have done, without the intervention of outward agencies, has willed to confer it, and under ordinary circumstances actually does confer it in no other way than by means and under the veil of material things, such as water in Baptism, chrism in Confirmation, oil in Extreme Unction, and so on with the other sacraments, along with the words which must accompany the administration of each sacrament. All these are things which are seen, touched, felt,—in a word, they are visible and outward signs.

And they were ordained by God for a double purpose—to signify the grace they contain and to truly confer it.

First of all, *to signify it*. It is the nature of a sign, as St. Augustine explains, to convey not only a knowledge of what it is in itself, but also a knowledge of some other thing distinct from it. Thus money, which in itself represents a silver, gold, or bronze coin, conveys also the idea of a certain determinate value which that coin possesses. In the same way, the signs used in the sacraments signify the interior grace annexed to them by a certain analogy, proportion and resemblance between the sign and the thing signified. Thus, the action of the priest as he pours water over the head of the infant, and at the same time pronounces certain words, represents the invisible operation by which God interiorly washes and purifies that infant's soul; in the same way as water applied outwardly to the body washes away dirt and stains. The same remark will apply to the other sacraments.

In the second place the sacraments are not mere empty signs denoting grace, but they are also *efficacious signs producing grace*; and hence it is that we say that, as well as signifying grace, *they produce and confer grace*. This is one of the principal prerogatives possessed by the sacraments of the New Law in comparison with the sacraments of the Old Law. The Old Law had its own sacraments, such, for instance, as circumcision, the paschal lamb, and many

prescribed purifications. But they were, according to St. Paul, *weak and needy elements*; ¹ they possessed no sanctifying power, but merely prefigured and represented the grace that was to be conferred by our sacraments. On the other hand our sacraments contain grace in themselves and truly confer it on those who place no obstacle in the way.

And how do they confer it? *Ex opere operato*, as theologians say; that is, by the force and efficacy intrinsic to and inherent in the sacrament itself; in other words, their power does not depend on the piety or merits either of the minister or of the receiver.

Not of the person who administers the sacraments; hence a priest, no matter how unworthy he may be, if he baptizes, absolves from sins in the tribunal of Penance, or consecrates the Holy Eucharist on the altar, baptizes and absolves and consecrates validly, provided the rite of the Church is properly observed, and his wickedness does not lead him to corrupt or deprave it.

Nor does the power of the sacrament depend on *the merit of the receiver*. This, it should be carefully borne in mind, does not mean that the sacrament must always produce its effect no matter in what manner it is received, well or ill; for it is certain that the proper dispositions are required on our part as conditions necessary for the sacrament to produce its effect; but it does mean that the effect must always be ascribed to the power of the sacrament, and not to our dispositions, even though the latter are required and demanded. The dispositions referred to do nothing more than remove the obstacles that may stand in the way of the efficacy of the sacrament; but the efficient productive cause of the grace is the sacrament itself. Thus, when you approach the sacrament of Penance with a sorrowful confession of your sins, God grants you pardon of them, but He grants it precisely on account of and in contemplation of the merits of His only Son which are applied to the soul in the sacrament itself—in virtue of that Precious Blood which is poured over the soul in the moment in which the priest pronounces the words of absolution.

Hence if the sacrament is deprived of its efficacy it is due to our fault alone and not to the sacrament. What cause is there in the world, be it ever so powerful, that is not impeded in its effect, if it encounters difficulties in the subject on which it works? Fire has the power to burn, but if the material is not combustible it will not burn. This, then, is what we are to understand when we say that the sacraments have the power to produce and confer grace.

But some one may ask: What relation, what connexion, can there possibly be between material signs and grace which is something spiritual, supernatural, divine? Naturally no connexion; wash and

¹ Gal. iv. 9.

re-wash yourself over and over again and you will not succeed in blotting out a single sin. These signs, then, have not, and cannot have a relation or connexion with grace unless through divine institution. And thus it is—the Author of the sacraments is Jesus Christ. He alone, as God, could, to an outward rite—to an external ceremony—give the power to remit sins, confer grace, and sanctify the soul.

The sacraments instituted by our Lord are seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. For this number there is no need to seek any other reason than the will of Him who was pleased to institute neither more nor less. What is certain is that with this number of sacraments He has deigned to provide for all our spiritual needs, and precisely in the same order and progression in which He provides for our temporal needs.

Seven things are in fact necessary towards the natural life of man—to be born, to grow, to be fed, to recover health if it has been lost, to regain powers weakened by infirmity, to have an unbroken succession of superiors to govern, and of children to preserve the human race. Matters are no way different with regard to the spiritual life of the Christian—Baptism gives him birth, Confirmation makes him strong, the Eucharist feeds him, Penance heals him, Extreme Unction fortifies him against the dangers of death, Holy Orders gives ministers to the Church, while Matrimony perpetuates both pastors and people. Thus in the seven sacraments we have a remedy for our various spiritual needs.

They are all great; yet each one, as the Council of Trent teaches, has its own special excellence according to which one is preferable to another. With regard to intrinsic dignity, the greatest of all is the Eucharist, because it contains the very Author of grace; with regard to the extrinsic dignity of the minister appointed to confer them, Confirmation and Orders are the greatest, because the bishop alone can dispense them; with regard to their signification, the most remarkable is the sacrament of Matrimony, representing, as it does, the hypostatic union of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ, and His moral union with His Church; with regard to ease of reception, Extreme Unction, which remits sins without the laborious process of confession; with regard to necessity, the most important are Baptism and Penance—the former being indispensably necessary to all, the latter to those who have lost their baptismal grace. This absolute necessity is not verified in the case of the other sacraments—leaving aside Orders and Matrimony, which are only necessary to society at large, and not to the individual, neither Confirmation, nor the Eucharist, nor Extreme Unction are absolutely necessary, since one may be saved

without them. They are, however, sometimes necessary as a matter of precept, and in such a case it would, under certain circumstances, be a sin to omit them.

Another point to be noticed is that each sacrament has three essential constituent parts—MATTER, FORM, and INTENTION. First of all these things must be used, or these actions done which were prescribed by Christ, such, for example, as water in Baptism, bread and wine in the Eucharist, confession of sin in Penance. These things or actions are called the *matter* of the sacraments. At the same time in which these things are used or these actions done, certain words determined by Christ must be uttered, and those are called the *form*. Both matter and form can be vitiated so as to render the sacrament invalid and null, as will be seen later on. Finally, there is requisite the intention in the minister to administer the particular sacrament, or at least to do what the Church intends to do. Hence the sacrament would be null if conferred in joke, or in derision, or without the actual, or at least virtual wish to confer it.

In the solemn administration of each sacrament the Church uses various ceremonies which, however, do not affect its essence which is independent of them; nevertheless they are not to be omitted or neglected, because their purpose is to bring out as clearly as possible both the dispositions which the sacraments demand in us, and the effects they produce and the obligations we contract in the reception of them.

Finally, the general effect of the sacraments already referred to is to confer sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace, however, is conferred by them in different ways, that is, in its beginning or as an increase, according to the different natures of the sacraments. Some of them—Baptism and Penance—are ordained to transfer us from a state of sin and of enmity with God into a state of grace and of friendship with Him, and on this account are called the *sacraments of the dead*, from the fact that they cause a new life in the soul already dead through sin. The other five are ordained to increase the grace that already exists in us, and are, therefore, called the *sacraments of the living*, which, moreover, require a pre-existing state of grace for their worthy reception.

Besides sanctifying grace, which is common to all the sacraments, there is another peculiar and special effect of some of the sacraments, and it is a *character*, seal, or spiritual mark, impressed on the soul and specially consecrating us to God—either as Christians as happens in Baptism, or as soldiers of Christ as is done in Confirmation, or as ministers of God as is done in Holy Orders.

Between grace and character there is a double difference that ought to be borne in mind. The first is that grace can be, and is, lost

through sin, while character can never be lost—it can never be effaced, neither by sin nor by apostasy, nor by infidelity; it is ever-abiding and inherent under all circumstances, and not only in this life but in the life to come, and hence it is that the three sacraments referred to cannot be received more than once.

The second difference is that in the sacraments grace is received only by persons properly disposed, and is received in greater or less quantity according to the greater or less degree of disposition; while character is received by all, no matter how badly disposed, provided only the sacrament has been validly administered.

But it may occur to some one to ask: Must those who have had the misfortune to receive these sacraments unworthily remain for ever deprived of the grace of Baptism, Confirmation, and Orders, since they are unable to receive them again on account of the character impressed? Not so; the moment the obstacle placed by sin is removed through a good confession, the grace of the sacrament revives and blooms just as if it were received afresh at that moment.

These, then, are the general notions to be borne in mind regarding the nature of the sacraments. I have glanced at them only briefly here, since later on they will receive fresh light during the detailed explanation of each sacrament which I propose to make. Meanwhile what conclusion are we to draw? What should be the fruit of this instruction? Is it not too clear and manifest not to be known already?

Let the first fruit be to return heartfelt thanks to Jesus Christ for having endowed us with so many and so powerful and easy means of receiving, preserving, and increasing His grace. These means cost us little indeed; but dear was the price He paid for them, since they cost Him nothing less than His bitter passion and death, which is the one and only meritorious cause of the sacraments. The sacraments are, according to the prophetic words of Isaias, the saving waters springing from the Saviour's adorable wounds to water and fertilize the barren and stony soil of our souls: *You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.*¹

In the second place, entertain the greatest possible esteem and respect for them—an esteem and respect which we should show in two ways: by using them frequently and by using them well. It is a great evil to abandon them and stand aloof from them; it is a greater evil to profane them by receiving them without the necessary dispositions; and it is downright blindness and folly to prefer to die and be lost rather than use the remedy mercifully prepared for us by Jesus Christ, or change it by our own fault into deadly poison.

¹ Isaias xii. 3.

Second Instruction on the Sacraments

SANCTIFYING GRACE CONFERRED BY THE SACRAMENTS

IN our last instruction we considered the sacraments in general. We saw why they were instituted and who instituted them ; we also considered their number, their nature, and their effects, which, as we saw, are two—grace and character. We contrasted these two effects so as to explain them up to a certain point, and bring into relief the difference that exists between them. As to character, we have nothing more to add. But the importance of the other effect is so great, and the subject is so difficult, that I have thought it well to devote a separate instruction to a brief and clear statement of the doctrine of grace in general and to that of sanctifying grace in particular.

In a general way every gift of God is a grace. Whatever we are and whatever we have is ours simply because God has, of His own free will, bestowed it on us. Our body, our soul, our life, our thoughts, our will, our senses, our faculties and possessions are ours because He has given them to us. We live, we move, we think, we will, we speak, we do, simply because He has given us the power of living, moving, thinking, willing, speaking, doing. Each of these powers is His gift, and consequently is a grace of God.

Yet, though freely given us by Him, it may, however, be said that we have a certain right to them in this, that God having created man, could not but give the faculties and powers that belong to the nature of man. He need not have created us at all, but having created us it was but natural—but due to our nature—that He should also give the faculties corresponding to and implied in that nature. Hence it is that all the various gifts referred to are called natural graces ; for, as we have seen, they are given because human nature demands them for its proper development.

But, as you know, these were not the only gifts conferred on man when for the first time he sprung fresh from the hands of God. God raised him above the nature and the destiny that belonged to him as man—gave him a far higher destiny, and far nobler endowments than any his nature could lay claim to or expect. In a word, man was elevated and destined to know, love, and serve God here on earth and to

be happy with Him hereafter in heaven. In other words, God lifted man up above the limits of his nature, gave him a destiny that was not included in the claims of that nature, endowed him with gifts and graces far above the requirements of that nature. And hence it is that these gifts are called supernatural graces, because they are above the reach or capacity of ordinary human nature.

In virtue of these graces our first parents were created in a state of original justice—their souls were unspotted, beautiful, glorious, and dear to God—they were placed in the garden of Paradise, they were to enjoy a life of unclouded happiness here on earth in the knowledge, love, and service of God, in innocence and peace, and when the time should come for them to leave this world they were to enter at once into the Beatific Vision and into the possession of the unending glory of heaven.

But they were not faithful to the trust reposed in them by their bounteous Creator. They sinned, and by their sin involved their ruin, and with their own ruin the ruin of their posterity. They were deprived of their original justice and innocence, and of all the graces implied therein, and instead of remaining friends of God, holy and dear in His sight, they became objects of His wrath, slaves of the devil, and at the mercy of their own evil passions, which were let loose unrestrained. Their sin was not confined to themselves—it descended to all their posterity—it is called original sin, and with one exception it stains the soul of every child of Adam, so much so that every infant born into the world is defiled with original sin, and is at enmity with God, and so long as that sin remains unforgiven the soul is hateful to God, can never enter into His presence, nor enjoy the happiness of heaven.

But God in His goodness did not forget the creature of His hands—in the fullness of time He mercifully deigned to apply a remedy to the ills of suffering humanity, and He sent His own beloved Son who purchased the redemption of the human race at the cost of His own bitter passion and death. In virtue of that redemption our souls are cleansed from original sin, are rendered bright and beautiful once more, and once more do we become friends of God and heirs of His kingdom. Now, the gift that enables us to pass from the state of sin to the love and friendship of God is sanctifying grace, which we familiarly describe as a supernatural gift bestowed on us by God for our salvation.

There are two great kinds of grace. First of all there is actual grace, which is the grace that at any given moment enables us to do good and avoid evil. Of this grace we shall have occasion to speak at another time; and we may now devote all our attention to

sanctifying grace, which is the gift of God that makes the soul holy and pleasing to Him, transfers it from a state of sin to a state of grace and abides in the soul and unites us to God, or, as it has been more accurately defined, it is a supernatural gift, inhering in the soul, rendering us just, God's adopted children, and heirs to Paradise.

It is a supernatural gift because freely given by God and for a supernatural object—an object above the capacity of unaided human nature.

It inheres in the soul, because it abides in the soul—does not merely cling to it, nor remain merely attached to it as a picture to a wall—but becomes one, so to say, with the soul it embellishes and beautifies. Let us explain this by an example. Iron when cool is black, and ugly, and hard, and unbending. But heat it red hot and notice the change. It loses its former appearance and becomes bright and glowing, so much so that brightness and heat become for the time being part and parcel of the iron, and so long as it remains hot they abide in it and cannot be separated from it, while the iron itself becomes beautiful and easily moulded into various shapes. In the same way sanctifying grace penetrates the soul, abides and inheres in it, transfuses it, and transfers it from a foul and ugly thing into a thing of beauty and brightness; just as iron when heated becomes like the fire itself, so does the soul when filled with the grace of God become beautiful and like to God, thus justifying the expression of St. Peter who calls it a *participation of the divine nature*,¹ and of St. Paul who speaks of it as *poured forth in our hearts*.²

Furthermore, we say *it renders us just*, whence it is also called justifying grace, because it washes away the stains of the soul; makes us just and upright in the sight of God, by the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, which, as St. John asserts, *cleanseth us from all sin*;³ strengthens and beautifies the soul, rendering us *holy and unspotted in His sight*;⁴ and makes us temples of the Holy Ghost: *Know you not*, asks St. Paul, *that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God?*⁵ Take an example. We read that the body of Lazarus was four days in the grave, and that corruption had already set in, rendering that body foul and loathsome and hateful to the sight. But our Lord in His tender compassion gave back the soul to that body, and the body that a moment before was foul and loathsome and unbearable, became, in an instant, a thing of life and beauty once more. In the same way is the soul dead and foul through sin; but the instant the grace of God is poured into that soul it is at once justified, and becomes bright and beautiful in itself and lovable in the sight of God.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 4.² Rom. v. 5.³ 1 John i. 7.⁴ Eph. i. 4.⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

Furthermore, sanctifying grace makes us *God's adopted children*. *Whosoever*, says St. Paul, *are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God . . . but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry : Abba (Father) ;*¹ while St. John cries out in wonder at the immense love of God *bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God.*²

And from this it also follows that grace makes us *heirs to the kingdom of heaven* ; for, as St. Paul explains, *if we are sons (we are) heirs also—heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ* to that glory which is to be ours in the realms of unending bliss, when the sufferings of this time shall have passed away and the glory that is to come is revealed to us. Grace, then, leads to everlasting happiness. *They*, says St. Paul, *who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ.*³

And worthy of mention also is it that grace gives dignity and value to all our good works. *I am the vine*, says our Lord, *and you are the branches, he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit* ;⁴ and St. Paul : *Our present tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*⁵

In one word, grace is the instrument of our salvation—by grace we are delivered from the guilt of sin that is past ; by grace we are preserved from the danger of sin to come and are enabled to work out our last end, which is to know, love, and serve God here on earth and to be happy with Him for ever in heaven.

It is worth noting here that though all the sacraments confer sanctifying grace, they do not all confer it in the same way. The object of two of the sacraments, Baptism and Penance, is to cleanse the soul from sin by conferring grace, and they are on that account called *sacraments of the dead*, because previous to their operation the soul is dead by sin. Now, the grace produced in this case is *justifying* grace, or *first* grace, because it renders the soul just and is the first grace that enters the soul after sin. It will be seen easily how it is that these two sacraments are absolutely necessary ; for it is by them that first grace is, in the ordinary ways of Providence, infused into the soul, cleansing it from sin and justifying it.

The object of the five remaining sacraments is to increase the *first* sanctifying grace already existing in the soul, and the grace they produce is called second grace. They are called *sacraments of the living* because they presuppose the existence of *first* sanctifying grace in the soul, so much so that a person who should consciously receive them in a state of mortal sin would be guilty of a very grave sacrilege.

¹ Rom. viii. 14, 15. ² 1 John iii. 1. ³ Rom. v. 17. ⁴ John xv. 5. ⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Furthermore, the more second grace is increased the holier and purer and dearer to God does the soul become, just as the more iron is heated the more bright and beautiful does it become. *The path of the just*, says the wise man, *as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth even to perfect day.*¹ But, on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that grace may be diminished, as is done by venial sin, or lost altogether as happens in mortal sin. *Let him that thinketh himself to stand take heed lest he fall.*²

There is one other grace conferred by the sacraments, and that is sacramental grace, which consists in the right which the reception of any one sacrament gives to have, when needed, the actual graces necessary to discharge the obligations or duties imposed by that sacrament. Thus in Baptism we acquire the right to have the graces necessary to live a Christian life ; in Confirmation, to profess our faith in spite of all dangers ; in Penance, to prevent us from falling back into sin ; in Extreme Unction, to enable us to overcome our enemies at the hour of death, and so on with the other sacraments.

From all that has been said so far it will be clear how absolutely necessary is grace, and especially first grace, and consequently how necessary are the sacraments that confer grace, especially Baptism and Penance. And it will be also clear how ready our Lord is at all times to pour that grace into the soul provided only we correspond to His wishes : *Behold*, He says, *I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and shall open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.*³

And yet though God holds out His hands filled with grace to impart to us, we can resist that grace or not consent to it, for grace still leaves us our own free will. If it is to operate in us, we must co-operate with it. Almighty God, says St. Augustine, is indeed ready to heal all that are infirm, yet He heals none but those who are willing to be healed. He that made you without yourself, he explains elsewhere, will not save you without yourself.

Now, as has been said more than once, it is through the sacraments that we receive justifying grace. If grace, then, is so necessary and so precious, necessary and precious must also be the sacraments through which that grace is communicated to us ; and if this is true, true also must it be that there is in all the wide world no gift we should prize so much and use so carefully as the sacraments. Jealously do we guard the apple of our eye through which the light of God's beautiful creation is poured into the soul ; more jealously far should we preserve the purity and integrity of those sacraments that lead the soul to the blessed sight of the vision of God Himself.

¹ Prov. iv. 18.² 1 Cor. x. 12.³ Apoc. iii. 20.

“Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ¹

¹ Rom. viii. 35-39.

CHAPTER II

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

1.—The sacrament of Baptism should be frequently explained.

FROM what has been hitherto said on the sacraments in general, it will readily be seen how necessary it is, both for a knowledge of the Christian religion and for the practice of Christian piety, to know all that the Catholic Church proposes for our belief regarding each sacrament in particular. Now, he who reads the Apostle attentively will unhesitatingly conclude that a perfect knowledge of Baptism is strongly demanded of the faithful—not only over and over again, but in words of greatest weight and full of the spirit of God, does he renew the memory of that mystery, commends its divinity and places before our eyes the death, burial and resurrection of our Redeemer for our contemplation and imitation.

2.—Special days for such explanation.

Let pastors, then, never conclude they have devoted too much pains and study to the explanation of this sacrament; but, besides those days on which, in accordance with time-honoured usage, the divine mysteries of Baptism are especially explained—that is on Holy Saturday, and the Vigil of Pentecost, when it was the custom of the Church to celebrate this sacrament with the greatest devotion and with special ceremonial—they should take advantage of other occasions to treat of this subject.

For this purpose no time seems more opportune than when on the occasion of some particular baptism, the pastor observes that a number of the faithful are present; for, though he will not be able to touch on all the points that refer to this sacrament, it will then be much easier to explain one or two points at a time when the faithful may piously and religiously contemplate the doctrine on these things which they both hear with their ears and see with their eyes expressed in the sacred ceremonies of Baptism. The result will be that each one will

be admonished by what he sees taking place in the person of another, and will call to mind the solemn promise by which he bound himself to God when he was initiated by Baptism; and he will also consider within himself whether in his life and conduct he has shown himself such as the very profession of Christianity implies.

I.—NAME AND NATURE OF BAPTISM

3.—The word Baptism signifies sacramental ablution.

Now, in order that the things that are to be taught may be lucidly set forth, the nature and substance of Baptism must be explained. First of all, however, it will be necessary to explain the meaning of the word itself.

Baptism, as everyone knows, is a Greek word, which, though in Holy Writ it signifies not only that ablution which is coupled with a sacrament, but also all other kinds of washing, and is even sometimes extended to express suffering; yet among Church writers it does not denote every kind of washing, but only that which is connected with the sacrament, and which is always accompanied by a prescribed form of words—a sense in which the Apostles very often used it in accordance with the institution of Christ.

4.—Other names for Baptism.

The holy Fathers also made use of other names to express the same thing. Thus, St. Augustine states that it was called the *sacrament of faith*, because they who receive it profess their unlimited faith in the Christian religion. Others called this sacrament *illumination*, because the heart is illuminated by the faith which it professes in Baptism; *call to mind*, says the Apostle, *the former days, wherein, being illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions*,¹ meaning by *former days* the time when they were baptized. Chrysostom also, in his sermon to the baptized, calls it a *purgation*, because through Baptism we *purge out the old leaven*² in order to become a *new paste*. He also calls it a *burial*, and a *planting*, and the *cross of Christ*—the foundation for all which names may be gathered from the Epistle to the Romans; while the reason why St. Denis called it the *beginning of the holy Commandments* is evident, seeing that this sacrament is, as it were, the gate through which

¹ Heb. x. 32.

² 1 Cor. v. 7.

we enter into the fellowship of the Christian life, and begin to obey the divine commands. So much briefly regarding the word.

Now as to the definition of the thing itself.

5.—Baptism defined. Though many definitions may be collected from sacred writers, yet that seems fittest and best which is gathered from the words of our Lord in St. John, and of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; ¹ and the Apostle speaking of the Church: *cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life*. ² From this it follows that Baptism may be well and accurately defined to be: The sacrament of regeneration by water in the word. By nature we are born from Adam children of wrath, but by Baptism we are born again in Christ children of grace. For *He gave power to men to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His Name, who are born not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. ³

But in whatever words the nature of Baptism may be defined, the people must be instructed that this sacrament consists of an ablution along with which, according to the institution of our Lord and Saviour, must be coupled certain solemn words as the holy Fathers have always taught. This is proved by the very clear testimony of St. Augustine: "The word is joined to the element and the sacrament is constituted." It will, however, be necessary to insist on this point all the more diligently, lest the faithful be led into the error of imagining, as commonly happens, that the very water which is preserved in the holy font for administering Baptism is the sacrament. It is to be called a sacrament then, and then only, when we actually use the water by way of ablution, and, along with the water, the words instituted by Christ our Lord.

Now as the single sacraments consist of matter and form, as we have said in the beginning when treating of the sacraments in general, it becomes necessary for the pastor to explain what precisely each of these is in Baptism.

7.—The matter of Baptism. The matter, then, or element of this sacrament is every kind of natural water, be it sea-water, river-water, water from a bog or well or

¹ John iii. 5.

² Eph. v. 26.

³ John i. 12, 13.

fountain—what in a word, without any qualification, is usually called water; for our Saviour has taught that *unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*;¹ while the Apostle says that the Church was cleansed *by the laver of water*; ² and we read in the Epistle of St. John: *There are three that give testimony on earth: the spirit, the water, and the blood.*³ This is also shown from several other passages of Holy Writ.

The statement, however, of St. John the Baptist that the Lord will come and will baptize *in the Holy Ghost and in fire*,⁴ must not for a moment be understood of the matter of Baptism, but must be applied, either to the inward operation of the Holy Ghost, or at least to the miracle that occurred on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven in the form of fire, a miracle which Christ our Lord foretold in another place: *John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.*⁵

In the Sacred Scripture also, we may note that this matter was signified both by figures and prophetic oracles. The Prince of the Apostles in his first Epistle shows that the flood by which the world was cleansed, because *the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and all the thoughts of their hearts were bent upon evil*,⁶ presented a figure and resemblance of this water.⁷ Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul dwelt on the fact that the passage of the Red Sea typified the same water;⁸ not to speak of the cleansing of Naaman the Syrian,⁹ the wonderful virtue of the Pool of Bethesda,¹⁰ and many similar figures plainly symbolic of this mystery.

As to prophecies, none can doubt that those waters, to which the prophet Isaias¹¹ so freely invites all who thirst, and those which Ezechiel¹² in spirit saw issuing forth out of the temple, as also the fountain which Zacharias foretold to be prepared for *the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner and of the unclean woman*,¹³ are directed towards indicating and expressing the saving water of Baptism.

How well fitted it was to the nature and efficacy of Baptism that water should have been instituted as its special matter St. Jerome, in his

10.—Why water was selected by God. ¹ John iii. 5. ² Eph. v. 26. ³ 1 John v. 8. ⁴ Matt. iii. 11. ⁵ Acts i. 5. ⁶ Gen. vi. 5. ⁷ 1 Peter iii. 20. ⁸ 1 Cor. x. 1. ⁹ 4 Kings v. 14. ¹⁰ John v. 2. ¹¹ Isaias lv. 1. ¹² Ezech. xlvii. 1. ¹³ Zach. xiii. 1.

letter to Oceanus, has abundantly pointed out. For the present purpose, however, pastors can, in the first place, show that, as this sacrament is absolutely necessary to all without exception for the attainment of everlasting life, water, which is always at hand and easily procurable by all, was a highly suitable matter. In addition to this, water admirably denotes the effect of Baptism; water washes away uncleanness, and hence aptly denotes the force and efficacy of Baptism, by which the stains of sin are wiped away. Moreover, as water is highly adapted to refresh bodies, so by Baptism is the heat of the passions abated.

It should be observed, however, that though
 11.—**Chrism is also used with the water.** in case of necessity simple water without any other admixture is sufficient matter of this sacrament, yet when Baptism is administered with solemn ceremonies it has been always the practice of the Catholic Church, in accordance with Apostolic tradition, to add holy chrism by which, as is clear, the effect of Baptism is more fully denoted. The people should also be taught that though it may sometimes be doubtful whether this or that water is genuine, and such as the perfection of the sacrament demands, yet this much must be held as certain, that on no account whatever can the sacrament of Baptism be ever constituted from any other matter than natural water.

Now that the matter which is one of the two
 12.—**The form of Baptism should be frequently explained.** parts of which Baptism consists has been carefully explained, the pastor will take the same care to explain the form also, which is its other and not less essential part. And in the explanation of this sacrament he will bear in mind that he should attend to it with all the greater care and diligence, for this reason, that the knowledge of a mystery of such holiness not only can of itself delight the faithful exceedingly,—a pleasure commonly found to arise from the knowledge of all divine things—but also should be eagerly sought after on account of its almost daily frequency. For—as will be more fully explained later on—occasions frequently arise when Baptism must be administered by members of the laity, and often by women, and hence it is that everything pertaining to the essence of this sacrament should be well known and thoroughly understood by all the faithful at large.

The pastor, then, will teach in clear and plain words, intelligible to all, that the perfect and absolute form of Baptism is as follows : *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* So was it appointed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when, according to St. Matthew, He commanded the Apostles : *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*¹ By the word *baptizing*, the Catholic Church, divinely instructed, rightly understood that in the form of this sacrament should be expressed the action of the minister, and this is shown in the words *I baptize thee*. And as, besides the ministers, it should signify both the person baptized and the principal cause effecting Baptism, the pronoun *thee* and the distinct names of the Divine Persons are therefore added ; so that the complete form of the sacrament is embraced in the words mentioned just now : *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* It is not the Person of the Son alone, of whom St. John writes : *He it is that baptizeth,*² who accomplishes the sacrament, but it is the work of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity together. By saying, however, in the *name* and not in the *names*, it is clearly indicated that in the Trinity there is but one nature and Godhead—for in this place the word *name* is not referred to the Persons, but denotes the divine substance, virtue, and power which is one and the same in all Three Persons.

13.—The words of the form.

It is, however, to be observed that in this form which, as we have shown, is full and perfect, some of the words are absolutely necessary, so much so, that if they be omitted there

can be no sacrament ; while there are others not so necessary as by their omission to invalidate the sacrament ; such, for instance, is the word *Ego*,³ the force of which is contained in the word *baptizo*—in the Greek Church it was even omitted, because of a variation in the sense intended to be conveyed ; for they considered that no mention need be made of the minister. Hence it came to pass that in Baptism in the Greek Church this form was universally used : “ Be the servant of Christ baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And yet from the decision and definition of the Council

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

² John i. 33.

³ This applies to the Latin form, not to the English.

of Florence, it appears that the sacrament was perfectly administered by them, inasmuch as by those words all that pertains to the essence of Baptism—that is ablution, which then actually takes place—is sufficiently denoted.

If, however, it had to be admitted that there
 15.—Baptism in the name of Christ. was a time when the Apostles baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, we must regard it as certain that they did so by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, with the object that in the infancy of the Church, their preaching might be rendered more remarkable by the name of Jesus, and His divine and immense power better known. Nay, if we look closely into the matter, we shall easily perceive that not one of the parts prescribed by our Saviour is missing in that form; for he who but names Jesus Christ signifies also the Person of the Father by whom He was anointed, and at the same time the Holy Ghost in whom He was anointed.

16.—It is doubtful if any such form was ever used by the Apostles. At the same time it may well seem doubtful whether the Apostles baptized anyone with the form in question, in view of the opinion of Ambrose, Basil and other holy and grave Fathers, who interpret “Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ” to mean not the Baptism given by John but the Baptism instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ; whilst according to this opinion the Apostles did not depart from the common and usual form which comprises the distinct names of the Three Persons. Now this is the meaning that St. Paul seems to have had in view, when he says in his Epistle to the Galatians: *As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ*¹—meaning they were baptized in the faith of Christ, yet with no other form than that which our Lord and Saviour commanded to be observed.

This much will be sufficient to teach the faithful
 17.—The ablution. How made? regarding the matter and form which essentially belong to the substance of Baptism. But as in the administrations of this sacrament the proper sort of ablution should be observed, the doctrine on this head also should be expounded by the pastor, and he should briefly show that, in accordance with the common custom and

¹ Gal. iii. 27.

practice of the Church, Baptism can be conferred in any one of three ways. Those who are to be baptized are either immersed in the water, or the water is poured on them, or they are sprinkled with water. No matter which of these three rites is observed, we must believe that Baptism is truly administered. For, water is used in Baptism to signify the washing of the soul which it effects—hence the name *laver*¹ given it by the Apostle. But ablution does not more really take place when a person is immersed in water—a practice which we know to have been long observed in the early Church—than by the effusion of water which we now see is the common custom, or by aspersion which, as we gather, was practised by St. Peter, who in one day converted and baptized three thousand men.

18.—Three-fold
ablution.

As to whether the ablution be performed once or thrice must be regarded as of no difference. It is sufficiently clear from the letter of St. Gregory the Great to Leander, that Baptism was formerly administered both ways in the early Church, and that the same may now be done. That rite, however, must be retained by the faithful which each one finds in use in his own country.

19.—The ablution
to be made on
the head.

But the pastor must especially show that not any part of the body at random is to be washed, but most particularly the head, in which all the senses, internal and external, have their seat; and also that the words of the sacrament, i.e., the form, must be pronounced by the person baptizing, neither before nor after the ablution but at the self-same time as the ablution.

II.—THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

20.—The institu-
tion of Bap-
tism.

After this it will be well to teach and direct the attention of the faithful to the fact that Baptism, like the other sacraments, was instituted by Christ our Lord. The pastor, then, will frequently dwell on this, and will explain that two different periods are to be noted in reference to Baptism—the one when our Saviour instituted it, the other when the law concerning its reception was promulgated.

¹ Tit. iii. 5.

With regard to the first it is clear that this sacrament was instituted by our Lord when He Himself, on being baptized by John, gave to water the power of sanctifying. St. Gregory and St. Augustine testify that it was precisely then that the power of generating to spiritual life was imparted to water. Augustine writes elsewhere: "From the time that Christ was immersed in the water, water washes away all sins;" and in another passage: "The Lord is baptized, not because He needed to be cleansed, but in order that by the touch of His pure body He might cleanse the waters and give them the power of cleansing."

A very strong argument on the point in question may be found in the fact that the Blessed Trinity in whose name Baptism is conferred, manifested their divine presence on that occasion. The voice of the Father was heard; the Person of the Son was there; the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove; while the heavens to which we may now ascend through Baptism were thrown open.¹

But should anyone desire to know how so great and divine a power was imparted by our Lord to water, that, indeed, exceeds the understanding of man. Yet this we do know, that, on our Lord being baptized, the water was consecrated to the saving use of Baptism by the touch of His most pure and holy body. But although instituted before His passion, yet we are to believe that Baptism derived all its force and efficacy from the passion, which was the consummation, so to say, of all the actions of Christ.

21.—The promulgation of the obligation of Baptism. As for the other point—the time when the law regarding Baptism became obligatory—there can be no doubt. Sacred writers are unanimous in holding that when, after the resurrection, our Lord gave the command to His Apostles: *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,*² from that precise moment all men who were to attain eternal salvation began to be bound by the law of Baptism. This is inferred from the authority of the Prince of the Apostles, when he says: *He hath regenerated us into a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;*³ as also from the passage of St. Paul: *He delivered Himself up for it* (speaking of the Church) *cleansing it by the laver of water in the word.*⁴ Both passages seem to

¹ Matt. iii. 16.² Matt. xxviii. 19.³ 1 Peter i. 3.⁴ Eph. v. 25.

refer the obligation of Baptism to the time immediately following our Lord's death ; so that there can be no doubt whatever that the words of our Saviour : *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*,¹ refer also to the time subsequent to the passion.

22.—Veneration due to the sacrament of Baptism. If all this is accurately treated by the pastor, the faithful will assuredly be led to recognize and devoutly venerate the exalted dignity of this sacrament, especially when they reflect that to each one, on being baptized, are given and bestowed by the invisible power of the Holy Ghost those choice and abundant gifts which were manifested by miracles on the occasion of the Baptism of Christ. Now, were our eyes so opened as happened to the servant of Eliseus, as to enable us to behold heavenly things, no one can be imagined so devoid of common sense as not to be filled with the greatest admiration for the mysteries of Baptism ; why, then, should we not expect a like result, when the riches of this sacrament shall have been revealed by the pastor in such a way that the faithful may be able to contemplate them, if not with the eyes of the body, yet with the keen vision of the soul illuminated with the light of faith ?

III.—THE MINISTERS OF BAPTISM

23.—The ministers of Baptism. In the next place it seems not only useful, but also necessary, to explain who are the ministers by whom this sacrament is administered, in order that those to whom the office is principally entrusted may strive to discharge it holily and devoutly, and that no one may presume to outstep his own province and unseasonably enter on or arrogantly intrude himself into another's office—all things, the Apostle admonishes, should be done *according to order*.²

In the case in question the faithful should be taught that there is a triple order of ministers. In the first are to be reckoned bishops and priests, to whom it has been given to exercise this office in their own right and not by any special permission. To them, in the persons of the Apostles, was addressed the command : *Go and baptize*. Lest, however, they should be compelled to neglect the more weighty charge of instructing

¹ John iii. 5.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

the people, bishops have been accustomed to leave the administration of Baptism to priests. At the same time it is clear from the teaching of the Fathers, and the practice of the Church, that priests exercise this function in their own right, so much so that they may administer Baptism even in the presence of the bishop. Ordained as they are to consecrate the Blessed Eucharist, which is the sacrament of peace and unity, it was but fitting that power should be given them to do all that is necessary to enable their fellow-man to become a sharer in that peace and unity. If, however, the Fathers sometimes state that the right to baptize without leave of the bishops is not given to priests, it would seem that this applies to that Baptism which was administered with special pomp on certain days of the year.

Deacons come next as ministers. Numerous decrees of the Fathers testify that, without consent of the bishop or priest, it was not lawful for them to administer this sacrament.

The lowest rank is that of those who can baptize in case of necessity, without the solemn ceremonies. In this number are included all, whether men or women, no matter to what sect they belong. For, in case of necessity, this function is permitted even to Jews, infidels, and heretics, with the sole proviso that they intend to do what the Catholic Church does in that act of her ministry. Many decrees of the ancient Fathers and of the Councils have confirmed this ; while the holy Council of Trent pronounces anathema against those who should dare to say that " that Baptism is not a true Baptism which is given, even by heretics, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with the intention of doing what the Church does." In this we may truly admire the boundless goodness and wisdom of our Lord, who, having made the reception of this sacrament obligatory on all, and having, as He did, appointed water as its matter, than which nothing is more common, in like manner willed that no one should be excluded from its administration, although, as already remarked, all are not permitted to use its solemn ceremonies. Not that the rites or ceremonies are of greater dignity, but because they are less necessary than the sacrament.

24.—Order to be observed in administering the sacrament

The faithful, however, must not imagine that this office is indiscriminately permitted to all in such a manner that it is not highly becoming to observe a certain precedence amongst its ministers. If a man is present a woman should not

attempt the administration of the sacrament ; if an ecclesiastic be present a layman should not ; if a priest be present a simple ecclesiastic should not. At the same time, midwives who are accustomed to baptize are not to be censured, if sometimes, in the presence of a man who has no practice in the administration of this sacrament, they were to perform what would otherwise seem to be the proper office of a man.

IV.—THE SPONSORS

Along with the ministers who, as already pointed out, administer Baptism, there is another class of persons who, according to a most ancient practice in the Church, are admitted to take part in the celebration of this holy and saving function. By writers on divine things they were formerly commonly called undertakers, sponsors, or sureties, and are now called godfathers or godmothers. As to their office, belonging, as it does, to almost all the laity, the pastor should explain it accurately, so as to show the faithful all that is principally necessary for its due discharge.

And first he should show how it is that, at Baptism, besides the ministers of the sacrament, godfathers and sponsors are present. The extreme fitness of their presence will be apparent to all who remember that Baptism is a spiritual regeneration by which we are born children of God. Of this new birth St. Peter thus speaks : *As new-born infants, desire the rational milk without guile.*¹ Just, therefore, as, when born into the world, an infant needs a nurse and instructor by whose help and labour he is brought up and instructed in learning and useful knowledge ; so in like manner it is necessary that those who, at the baptismal font, begin to live a spiritual life, should be entrusted to the fidelity and prudence of some one from whom they may imbibe the precepts of the Christian religion, and be trained in all manner of piety, and thus gradually grow up in Christ until at last, by God's help, they reach perfect Christian manhood. More especially are sponsors required for this reason, that pastors who have the public care and charge of parishes can have little time to enable them to undertake the individual instruction of children in the faith. As to the antiquity of this custom we have the remarkable testimony of St. Denis : " It occurred

¹ 1 Peter ii. 2.

to our divine leaders [thus he calls the Apostles], and they resolved to admit infants to Baptism, but according to this holy custom, that the natural parents of a child should entrust him to the care of one learned in divine matters who should be his teacher, and under whom, as under a divine father and guardian of his holy salvation, the child might lead the remainder of his life." This is confirmed by the authority of Hyginus.

26.—**Spiritual affinity arising therefrom.** Wisely, then, has it been ordained by the Church, that not only he who baptizes contracts an affinity with the person baptized, but also the sponsor with the godchild and its natural parents, with the result that between all such persons no lawful marriage can be entered into, or if entered into is null and void.

27.—**Duties of sponsors.** The faithful should also be instructed in the duties of sponsors. So carelessly is this office undertaken in the Church that only the bare name of the function is left—of the holiness contained therein, men do not seem to have the faintest idea. In general, then, sponsors should always bear in mind that they are specially bound to exercise a constant vigilance over their spiritual children, and to take particular care that in all that pertains to the formation of a Christian life they may ever prove themselves to be such as their sponsors promised in the solemn ceremony. On this subject let us hear St. Denis interpreting the words of the sponsor: "I promise to train up this child, by my ceaseless instruction, as soon as he shall arrive at a knowledge of things sacred, to renounce all that is opposed to, and profess and perform, the promise he now makes." St. Augustine also says: "I specially warn you, both men and women, who have acted as sponsors in Baptism, to bear in mind that you have become sureties in the sight of God for those whom you received at the holy font." It certainly is highly becoming that he who undertakes an office should never fail in the diligent discharge thereof; and that he who professed to be the guide and teacher of another should never allow him to be deserted when he has once received him under his charge and protection, so long as he knows him to stand in need of help and care. Speaking of the office of sponsors, St. Augustine in a few words sums up all the lessons they should impart to their spiritual children: "They should," he says, "admonish them to observe chastity, love justice, preserve charity; and above

all things teach them the Creed and Lord's Prayer, as also the Commandments and the first rudiments of the Christian religion."

28.—Who may not be sponsors. This being the case, we readily see to what sort of men the administration of this holy sponsorship should not be entrusted—that is, to those who will not discharge it faithfully or who cannot do so diligently and carefully. Wherefore, setting aside the natural parents who may not undertake this office (showing thereby how much this spiritual training is different from the carnal), in the first place heretics, Jews, and infidels are altogether to be excluded from this office, for this reason, that their thoughts and cares are ever directed towards obscuring the truths of faith by falsehood and subverting all Christian piety.

29.—The number of sponsors. It is decided by the Council of Trent that the sponsors for any one infant should not be numerous, but simply one godfather or one godmother, or at the most a godfather and godmother. The reason being that the proper method of discipline and instruction might be confused by a number of teachers, and also because it was necessary to guard against the multiplication of such affinities as would hinder the wider diffusion of the social union that arises from the bonds of lawful marriage.

V.—NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

30.—Baptism necessary to all. Now, if a knowledge of all that has been explained up to this be regarded as exceedingly useful to the faithful, assuredly also nothing is more necessary to them than to be taught that the law of Baptism is so strictly imposed by our Lord on all men, that unless they be born again to God through the grace of Baptism, they are born of their parents only to eternal misery and perdition, be those parents Christian or infidel. The pastor should, therefore, frequently expound the Gospel words: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*¹

¹ John iii. 5.

31.—Infants to be baptized. That this law does not apply merely to adults but also to children and infants, and that the Church has received this from Apostolic tradition is confirmed by the unanimous doctrine and authority of the Fathers. We cannot but believe that Christ our Lord did not will that the sacrament and grace of Baptism should be denied to children, concerning whom He said: *Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven*;¹ whom, too, He embraced, laid His hands on, and blessed.² And when we read that a whole family was baptized by Paul, it is natural to suppose that the children also who belonged to that family were baptized.³ Circumcision also, which was a figure of Baptism, strongly sanctions the custom; for, as everyone knows, children were circumcised on the eighth day after birth. Now if circumcision *made by hand, in despoiling of the body of the flesh*,⁴ was of use to children, it is evident that Baptism, which is Christ's circumcision, not *made by hand*, is also of use to them. Lastly, according to the teaching of the Apostle: *If by one man's offence death reigned through one; much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ*.⁵ Since, then, by the sin of Adam, children contract original sin, much more should they through Christ our Lord attain grace and justice to reign unto life which cannot be effected without Baptism.

Hence the pastor will teach that infants are unhesitatingly to be baptized, and that their tender age is to be formed later on, little by little, to true devotion by the precepts of the Christian religion. As the wise man has well said: *A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it*.⁶

Nor can we doubt but that they receive the gifts of faith as soon as they are baptized; not indeed that they believe with the assent of the mind, but because they are established in the faith of their parents if their parents belong to the number of the faithful; if not (to use St. Augustine's words), then in the faith of the whole company of the saints. For we may truly say that they are presented for Baptism by all those who desire to see them presented, and whose charity admits them to the communion of the Holy Ghost.

¹ Matt. xix. 14. ² Mark x. 16. ³ 1 Cor. i. 16. ⁴ Col. ii. 11. ⁵ Rom. v. 17.
⁶ Prov. xxii. 6.

33.—Baptism of infants should not be deferred.

The faithful should also earnestly be exhorted to take care that their children are brought to the church, as soon as it is possible to do so without danger, and baptized with the usual solemn ceremonies. There being no other means of salvation open to infants, except Baptism, it will readily be understood how great is the guilt incurred by those who suffer them to be deprived of the grace of that sacrament longer than necessity requires, especially as on account of their fragile age, almost countless dangers threaten them.

34.—Baptism of adults.

The practice of the ancient Church shows that a different method should be observed in the case of those who are adults and who enjoy the perfect use of reason, such, for instance, as those who are born of infidel parents. To such the Christian faith has to be explained, and they must be earnestly exhorted, persuaded, and invited to embrace it. And if they are converted to the Lord our God, then they must be admonished not to defer their Baptism beyond the time prescribed by the Church. Since it is written : *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day,*¹ they are to be shown that true conversion consists in regeneration by Baptism ; that the longer they delay Baptism so much the longer will they be deprived of the grace and use of the other sacraments which are the soul of the Christian religion, and which are unattainable without Baptism ; and that they are deprived of the choice graces which Baptism confers. The water of Baptism not only washes and removes the stains and marks of all sins previously committed, but also adorns us with divine grace, by the aid and assistance of which we are enabled to avoid sin, and preserve justice and innocence, in which two things all will readily understand the sum of Christian life consists.

35.—Adults are to be prepared for some time.

Though this is so, nevertheless the Church has not been accustomed to confer Baptism on this class of persons immediately, but has decided that it should be deferred for a certain time.

This delay does not imply the same danger which, as we have pointed out, impends over infants—should any sudden accident happen to hinder adults from being baptized in the saving water, being, as they are, endowed with the use of reason, their

¹ Eccclus. v. 8.

intention and resolution to receive Baptism and do Penance for their former ill-spent life will avail to grace and justification. On the other hand this delay seems to present certain advantages. And first, as the Church must be very careful that no one approach this sacrament through hypocrisy and dissimulation, the intentions of those who seek Baptism are better examined and ascertained. Hence we find it decreed by the ancient Councils that Jews converted to the Catholic faith were to remain amongst the Catechumens for some months before being admitted to Baptism. Secondly, they are better instructed in the truths of that faith which they are to profess, and in the practices of Christian life. And thirdly, greater religious reverence is paid to the sacrament when administered to adults with solemn ceremony on the appointed days of Easter and Pentecost.

36.—Baptism of adults not always to be deferred. Occasionally, however,—for a just and necessary cause—the time of Baptism is not to be deferred, as, for instance, where there seems to be imminent danger to life, and especially where those to be baptized already fully understand the mysteries of faith. This was done by Philip and the Prince of the Apostles, when the one baptized the eunuch of Queen Candace, the other Cornelius, and that without any delay and as soon as they proposed to embrace the faith.

VI.—DISPOSITIONS FOR BAPTISM

37.—Dispositions for Baptism. It should also be taught and explained to the people how those to be baptized should be disposed.

First of all they must desire and intend to receive Baptism ; for as in Baptism each one dies to sin and undertakes to lead a new life, it is but fit that Baptism should not be administered to anyone that is unwilling to receive it or who refuses to receive it, but to those only who freely and readily receive it. Hence we know from holy tradition that it has always been the practice that Baptism should be administered to no one without his being previously asked whether he wished it. Even in children it is not to be supposed that that will is wanting, since the will of the Church which answers in their place cannot be regarded as doubtful.

38.—Baptism of
insane persons.

Furthermore, it should be taught that the insane and the mad who were once of sound mind and have subsequently fallen into insanity, and who at that time had no intention of receiving Baptism, are not to be baptized unless in case of danger to life. When such danger is present they are to be baptized, provided they showed any signs of such wish previous to their madness ; otherwise Baptism is not to be administered. The same remark applies to those that are sunk in sleep. If, however, such persons were never of sound mind so far as to enjoy the use of reason they are to be baptized just like children before the use of reason, as both the authority and practice of the Church sufficiently declare.

39.—Other requisites for Baptism.

But besides the desire of being baptized, faith is also very necessary to obtain the grace of the sacrament, for the same reason as has been already given for having the intention. Our Lord and Saviour has taught : *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*¹

In the second place, it is necessary that each one should repent of his sins and of his ill-spent life, and resolve to avoid all sin for the future. He that desires Baptism while unwilling to correct his habit of sinning is unhesitatingly to be rejected ; nothing is so contrary to the grace and efficacy of Baptism as the mind and intention of those who never think of putting any end to sinning. Now, since Baptism should be sought with the object of putting on Christ and being united to Him, it is clear that he who purposes to remain in sin and vice should deservedly be rejected from holy Baptism, particularly as none of those things which pertain to Christ and His Church are to be received in vain ; and as far as sanctifying and saving grace are concerned we are well aware that Baptism will be unavailing to him who purposes to *walk according to the flesh and not according to the spirit*,² even though, as regards the sacrament itself, the person who is duly baptized, provided he intends to receive what the holy Church administers, undoubtedly receives the sacrament validly. Hence the Prince of the Apostles thus answered that great multitude who, Holy Scripture relates, in compunction of heart asked him and the other Apostles what they should do : *Do penance and be baptized, every one of you* ;³ and in another passage : *Be penitent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*⁴ And St. Paul writing to the Romans plainly

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

² Rom. viii. 4.

³ Acts ii. 38.

⁴ Acts iii. 19.

shows that he who is baptized should unhesitatingly die to sin ; and hence he warns us not to yield our *members as instruments of iniquity unto sin, but present ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead.*¹

Now, if the faithful frequently meditate on these points they will be led, first, to earnestly reverence the infinite goodness of God, who, out of His own pure mercy alone, has bestowed upon us, who little deserved such mercy, so special and so divine a blessing as that of Baptism ; and, secondly, when they put before their eyes how free from sin should be the lives of those who are blessed with so great a gift, they will easily see that it is specially required of every Christian to strive to spend each day of his life so holily and so religiously as if he had received the sacrament and grace of Baptism that very day.

To inflame the soul, however, to the pursuit of true piety nothing is more profitable than for the pastor to give an accurate explanation of the effects of Baptism.

40.—Advantage to be derived from these considerations.

¹ Rom. vi. 13.

BAPTISM

1. NATURE AND EFFECTS OF BAPTISM

Q. What is the sacrament of Baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament by which we are born again to the grace of God, and become Christians.

Q. What are the effects of the sacrament of Baptism?

A. The sacrament of Baptism confers *first* sanctifying grace by which original sin is washed away, as well as all actual sin if any such exists; it remits all punishment due on account of such sins; it imprints the character of a Christian; it makes us children of God,

members of the Church, and heirs to Paradise, and enables us to receive the other sacraments.

Q. What is the matter of Baptism?

A. The matter of Baptism is natural water which is poured on the head of the person to be baptized in such a quantity as to flow.

Q. What is the form of Baptism?

A. The form of Baptism is: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

2. MINISTER OF BAPTISM

Q. To whom does it belong to confer Baptism?

A. To confer Baptism belongs by right to bishops and parish priests; but in case of necessity any person, whether man or woman, even a heretic or an infidel, can administer it, provided he carries out the rite of Baptism, and has the intention of doing what the Church does.

Q. If it were necessary to baptize a person in danger of death, and if several people were present, who should administer the sacrament?

A. If it were necessary to baptize

a person in danger of death, and if several people were present, a priest, if such were at hand, should administer the sacrament, and in his absence one of the inferior clergy; and in the absence of such, a layman in preference to a woman, unless in the case in which the greater skill, on the part of the woman, or the claims of propriety, should demand otherwise.

Q. What intention should the person baptizing have?

A. The person baptizing should have the intention of doing what Holy Church does in baptizing.

3. THE RITE OF BAPTISM AND THE DISPOSITION OF THE ADULT WHO RECEIVES IT

Q. How is Baptism given?

A. Baptism is given by pouring water on the head of the person to be baptized—and if it cannot be poured on the head, then on some other principal part of the body—

saying at the same time: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Q. If one were to pour the water and another to pronounce the words would the person be baptized?

A. If one poured the water and another said the words the person would not be baptized; but it is necessary that the same person who pours the water should pronounce the words.

Q. In doubt whether the person is dead, is it right to omit to baptize him?

A. In doubt whether the person is dead, he should be baptized conditionally, saying: "If thou art alive I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Q. When should infants be brought to the church to be baptized?

A. Infants should be brought to the church to be baptized as soon as possible.

Q. Why such anxiety to have infants receive Baptism?

A. There should be the greatest anxiety to have infants baptized, because on account of their tender age they are exposed to many dangers of death, and cannot be saved without Baptism.

Q. Do parents sin, then, who, through negligence, allow their

children to die without Baptism, or who defer it?

A. Yes, fathers and mothers who, through negligence, allow their children to die without Baptism sin grievously, because they deprive their children of eternal life; and they also sin grievously by putting off Baptism for a long time, because they expose them to danger of dying without having received it.

Q. When the person who is being baptized is an adult, what dispositions should he have?

A. An adult who is being baptized, besides faith, should have at least imperfect contrition for the mortal sins he may have committed.

Q. If an adult was baptized in mortal sin without such sorrow, what would he receive?

A. If an adult was baptized in mortal sin without such sorrow he would receive the character of Baptism, but not the remission of his sins nor sanctifying grace. And these two effects would be suspended, until the obstacle is removed by perfect contrition or by the sacrament of Penance.

4 NECESSITY OF BAPTISM AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE BAPTIZED

Q. Is Baptism necessary to salvation?

A. Baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation, for our Lord has expressly said: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Q. Can the absence of Baptism be supplied in any other way?

A. The absence of Baptism can be supplied by martyrdom, which is called Baptism of Blood, or by an act of perfect love of God, or of contrition, along with the desire, at least implicit, of Baptism, and this is called Baptism of Desire.

Q. To what is the person baptized bound?

A. The person baptized is bound to always profess the faith and observe the Law of Jesus Christ and of His Church.

Q. In receiving holy Baptism what do we renounce?

A. In receiving holy Baptism we renounce, for ever, the devil, his works and pomps.

Q. What is meant by the works and pomps of the devil?

A. By the works and pomps of the devil we mean sin and the maxims of the world that are contrary to the maxims of the Gospel.

5. NAMES AND SPONSORS

Q. Why is the name of a saint given to him who is being baptized ?

A. To him who is being baptized is given the name of a saint in order to put him under the protection of a heavenly patron and to animate him to imitate that saint's example.

Q. Who are the godfathers and godmothers in Baptism ?

A. The godfathers and godmothers in Baptism are those persons who in accordance with the decree of the Church hold the infants at the font, answer for them, and become guarantees in the sight of God for their Christian education, especially in the absence of the parents.

Q. Are we obliged to keep the promises and renunciations made for us by our sponsors ?

A. We are certainly obliged to observe the promises and renunciations made for us by our sponsors,

because it is only on this condition that God has received us into His grace.

Q. What sort of persons should be chosen as godfathers and godmothers ?

A. There should be chosen as godfathers and godmothers Catholics of good life, and obedient to the laws of the Church.

Q. What are the obligations of godfathers and godmothers ?

A. Godfathers and godmothers are obliged to see that their spiritual children are instructed in the truths of faith, and live as good Christians, and they should edify them by their good example.

Q. What tie do sponsors contract in Baptism ?

A. Sponsors contract a spiritual relationship with the baptized and with the parents of the baptized, which causes an impediment to marriage with these persons.

Third Instruction on the Sacraments

BAPTISM: ITS NATURE AND PARTS

HAVING explained the sacraments of the Church in general, I now come to the explanation of each one of them in particular, and I commence with Baptism which is the first, the most necessary, and, to use the expression of the Fathers, the gate of all the other sacraments; for no one can receive the others validly unless he is a Christian, and he becomes a Christian by means of holy Baptism alone.

True, indeed, all of us here present have already received this sacrament, nor can we ever receive it again; nevertheless this should not hinder us from speaking about it. Having in fact received it at an age in which we were incapable of recognizing either its dignity and excellence, or the wondrous effects it produces in us, or the strict obligations we contracted thereby, it becomes important to bring it home to our minds from time to time, in order to be fully alive to the considerations it involves, and thence be encouraged to live grateful and thankful to God for this great benefit, and faithful to the grace which it confers, and for which each of us shall one day have to render a strict account.

In addition to this, it may easily happen that the salvation of an infant in danger of death may be committed to us by God. Hence it is necessary that all, both men and women, should know how to baptize, and what are the essential parts of that sacrament.

What, then, does the word *baptism* mean? In a general way it signifies any kind of washing; but it is used by the Church to signify the act of washing a person who is being made a Christian, while at the same time certain words ordained by Christ are pronounced by the person baptizing. Hence Baptism is a sacrament of regeneration instituted by Christ, in which by means of an outward washing of the body, applied along with certain definite words, is signified and produced the inward washing of the soul which is accomplished by the Holy Ghost.

Instituted by Christ—When? Although it was only after His resurrection that He commanded the Apostles to go forth into the whole world, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless the Roman Catechism, in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers, teaches

that Christ instituted it when He was baptized by St. John in the Jordan. "He willed to be baptized," says St. Augustine, "not because He stood in need of it, for He was innocence and holiness itself, but to sanctify the waters by the contact of His holy body and give them the power to cleanse souls from sin." And it was precisely at that moment, proceeds the Catechism, that the Holy Trinity, in whose name Baptism is conferred, was explicitly manifested; for at that moment was heard the voice of the divine Father uttering these words to His Son: *This is my beloved Son*; ¹ the divine Son was present; and the Holy Ghost descended on Him in the form of a dove. Then it was that the heavens were opened, and their doors were unfolded to us by means of holy Baptism.

Let us now examine the parts necessary to constitute this sacrament. The matter of the sacrament is true natural water—*Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost*, says our Lord, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* ²—such as rain-water, water from wells, rivers, or pools, provided only it is not altered in such a way as to lose the nature of water. Hence it cannot be artificial water, such as that distilled from flowers; much less can it be any of the various liquors, which have not even the name of water, nor can it be wine, beer, or milk. The practice of the Church is to use water that is not only clean but also blessed and set apart for this special purpose. This, however, does not pertain to the essence of the sacrament, for the validity of which ordinary natural water is sufficient.

The water should be applied after the manner of washing, and can be done in three ways—by immersion, by effusion, and by aspersion. By immersion, that is, by dipping or immersing the infant in water; by effusion, that is, by pouring water over the infant, and this is the common practice; by aspersion, that is, by sprinkling the infant with water—a practice no longer in use. In whichever of these three ways Baptism is conferred it is good and valid; but in solemn Baptism it is becoming to follow the local custom.

It is not, however, necessary to wash the whole body—it is sufficient to wash the principal part of the body which is the head; and if that is impossible, then any other available part, taking good care, however, to remember, that Baptism which has not been conferred on the head is at least doubtful, and should therefore be repeated conditionally as soon as possible. But in all cases it is necessary to pour the water in such a quantity that it can flow, and not merely to apply a drop; for it is one thing to wash and quite another thing to simply moisten. In order to have a real washing there is

¹ Matt. iii. 17.

² John iii. 5.

required either a continuous application of the body to the water, as is done in immersion, or a continuous application of the water to the body, as is had in Baptism by effusion.

This washing must be accompanied by the words prescribed by Christ, which constitute the form of the sacrament. Now, what are these words? In solemn Baptism they are uttered in Latin; but, as Baptism is valid, no matter what the language used, you should at all times remember the form in English, which is: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. It was Jesus Christ Himself who taught us this form, when He said to the Apostles: *Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.¹

Three things must necessarily be expressed in order to secure the substance of the form—the action of baptizing, the person being baptized, and each of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity by name. Hence it is that all these words, *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, are essential. If the word *thee* is left out, the person who is being baptized is not designated; if the words *I baptize* are omitted, the action of baptizing is not signified; while if the remaining words are wanting, there is no distinct invocation of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, and Baptism conferred in the name of the Trinity would not be valid without distinguishing the Persons.

Two other points should be borne in mind. First, the matter and form must be applied by one and the same person who baptizes. Hence the Baptism would be invalid if one person were to pour the water, and another pronounce the form. Secondly, the matter and form must be morally united so as to form one single action—that is, the words should not be finished before the water is poured, nor the water poured before commencing the words. It must not be understood that a perfect correspondence between the two is necessary, but they should overlap each other at some point.

What should you do, then, if you had to baptize an infant? You should take natural water, even water that is not blessed, if the latter is not available at the moment, and pour it over the head of the infant to be baptized, or if it is not possible to pour it over the head, then over the principal available part of the body, saying at the same time as you pour the water: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, and having the intention to baptize, or at least to do as the Church does.

From this it will be clear that anyone can be the minister of the sacrament of Baptism. True, indeed, if we speak of solemn Baptism

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

administered with the rites and ceremonies of the Church, it pertains to the Bishop, the parochial clergy, and, with special leave, to a deacon. But if we speak of private Baptism, which is conferred in case of necessity, anyone at all, even an unbeliever, can always validly and lawfully administer it provided there is necessity, in the absence of which such an act would be an intrusion, a usurpation, rendering it if not invalid, at least unlawful.

Even in case of necessity a certain order should be observed, giving the precedence to a priest in preference to a layman, and to a man in preference to a woman, except in certain cases when it would be well to entrust the administration of the sacrament to the most skilful, so as to avoid all danger of rendering the sacrament null. But, let us repeat, any person, of any condition, of any sect or religion, even a heretic, schismatic, or unbeliever, can confer it validly. The Church has always regarded Baptism conferred by heretics as valid, provided it is certain that they had used the proper matter and form. The divine providence and mercy of Jesus Christ, the Author of the sacraments, has so ordained this, to lessen, as far as possible, the danger of children departing this life, without a sacrament of such vital necessity. In order to render it easy, He has established as matter one of the commonest of things, water; as form, a few words that can be learned even by the most ignorant; and as minister, any person who has arrived at the use of reason.

And in fact this sacrament is necessary, with that absolute necessity called by theologians necessity of *means*, that is to say, so necessary that the loss of it, even through no fault of one's own, excludes one from eternal salvation. And surely an infant who cannot receive it cannot be considered to be in fault; and yet by the fact that he has not received it, he is excluded from the kingdom of heaven, according to the words of our Lord to Nicodemus: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*¹

I do not now intend to discuss the fate or the precise condition of those children who die before they have received Baptism. What is certain and of faith is, according to the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, that, dying without Baptism, they are separated for ever from God and deprived of the Beatific Vision. And as this is the greatest of all misfortunes—and one, moreover, that is easily incurred by infants whose life is so frail and exposed to so many unforeseen accidents—parents should be most careful to bring their children, as soon as possible, to the church to be baptized, which is the only means of their salvation. So important is this duty that in some places

¹ John iii. 5.

excommunication was incurred by those parents who deferred the Baptism for more than a week.

Great, however, as is the necessity of Baptism, it is certain according to the teaching of the Church that it can be supplied in two other ways—by *desire*, and by *martyrdom*.

First, by *desire*—a kind of Baptism which applies to adults only. If an unbaptized adult, finding himself at the point of death, or even at any other time, has a lively contrition for his sins, along with an ardent desire of receiving Baptism, his desire, accompanied by charity, would accomplish in him what the sacrament accomplishes. And in fact the Church has always looked favourably on the eternal salvation of those catechumens who, while seriously preparing to receive Baptism, were cut off by sudden death. Nor would it be useless even for us to conceive such a desire; for this reason, that while Catholics born of Christian parents and in Christian countries have usually no reason for doubt as to the Baptism received by them, yet no one can be infallibly certain that he has been validly baptized. True, a faint doubt of the kind should not be allowed to trouble us; but at the same time each one is wisely advised to sometimes excite in himself the desire of being baptized, and renew an act of perfect love of God with sincere sorrow for the sins he may have committed, and along with this the wish to be baptized in case the Baptism already received was null and void.

Secondly, by *martyrdom*—and this applies to both adults and infants. Hence if a child or an adult is put to death for the cause of Jesus Christ and His holy faith, that death holds for him the place of Baptism. Nor does it matter that a child is not able to suffer death for Jesus Christ with full knowledge of the cause, and with free act of the will—to be put to death even without knowing it is enough for God to be pleased to consider him a martyr and save him, as He saves other children by means of ordinary Baptism without their knowledge and without any consent of their will. Of this we have an example in the children the impious Herod put to death in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood on the occasion of the birth of Christ. The Church celebrates their feast and honours them as martyrs. In like manner also the Church honours as martyrs numbers of gentiles who, in times of persecution, presented themselves before the tyrants, proclaimed themselves Christians, and on that account suffered death even before they were baptized.

We can, then, distinguish three kinds of Baptism—of water, of blood, and of desire. This does not mean that there is not properly only one single Baptism, according to St. Paul's expression: *One faith, one Baptism*; for Baptism as a sacrament is only one, that is

Baptism of water, while the other two are not properly Baptisms nor sacraments conferring grace, but are improperly called Baptisms for this reason, that in defect of the Baptism of water, the other two take its place, and through the merciful disposition of God produce the same effect. Hence it is that an adult, justified by the Baptism of desire, is not dispensed thereby from receiving the Baptism of water; just in the same way as a man who, by virtue of perfect contrition, has obtained pardon of his sins is not dispensed from the obligation of confession.

Thus far I have done little more than explain all that pertains to the valid administration of the sacrament of Baptism—considerations that can be useful to others in case you may have to confer it, but which do not directly concern yourselves, inasmuch as you have already received it. Other points of great importance which do concern us personally and closely remain to be explained, in reference to the effects of Baptism and the obligations contracted thereby. The subject, however, demands some time to be treated properly, and hence must be deferred to a future occasion.

Before concluding the present instruction I shall refer briefly to the office of godfather and godmother in the administration of Baptism—an office which is at one time requested by you for your own children, at another assumed by you for the children of others.

This office imposes the duty of holding the child at the font, giving it a name, answering for it when it cannot reply to the questions put to it, and, above all, making oneself surety and sponsor before God for its Christian education, and supplying for the parents' negligence. Hence the name godfather and godmother, that is, second father and second mother; and they are really spiritual fathers and mothers by reason of the spiritual generation which the infant acquires in the sacrament of Baptism, and from which also arises a spiritual relationship which they contract with the infant they hold at the sacred font and with its parents.

It is not, then, an office of mere formality nor an empty ceremony, but a real obligation contracted in the sight of God. Suppose that your godchild, either through his parents' fault or through misfortune, finds himself abandoned and deprived of all spiritual and even temporal assistance; whose duty will it be to help him if not yours who assumed the office and put yourself in the closest relationship with him?

From this arises a twofold duty—one on the part of those who have to select sponsors, and the other on the part of those who are so chosen.

In the selection of sponsors, parents should conform to the

instructions and decrees of the Church, and aim principally at goodness of life, and not at the riches or name of the person chosen, or the temporal advantage that might be derived from him. If you do not blindly entrust money to every sort of person, much less should you entrust your children to persons of indifferent or scandalous lives and evil reputation.

On the other hand, those who are chosen for this office should not blindly undertake it without knowing and weighing well the obligation they assume. This should not, indeed, hinder you from assuming it, for it will always be a meritorious act of charity—nay of abundant charity to those poor parents who find themselves in difficulties, not knowing to whom to turn for help at such a moment. But you must have a pure intention, and above all guard against assuming that office for unworthy motives, and base or sinful aims.

I do not say this without reason. So great is the baseness of the world, that many freely offer themselves for this office in order to have a pretext for insinuating themselves into certain houses to abuse them under the title of godfather or gossip. Is it possible? Must a sacrament serve as a means to sin—as an instrument and a road to intrigues and low practices? Let us throw a veil over these sacrilegious proceedings—either do not assume the office at all, or assume it in the spirit of true Christians.

The remaining ceremonies of the sacrament of Baptism, or at least the more remarkable, will be considered in the explanation of the two points referred to above—the effects which it works in us and the obligations we contract therein.

Fourth Instruction on the Sacraments

BAPTISM : THE OBLIGATIONS IT IMPOSES

BEFORE speaking of the obligations arising out of Baptism, it is necessary to remind you that they do not cease to possess all their binding force owing to the fact that they were assumed at a tender age without one's knowledge and will. Even unbelievers, and indeed all men who have the use of reason, are bound to observe the divine natural law of the Decalogue which embraces so many obligations, and those neither small nor light ; while if we consider the other positive duties imposed specially on us by Christianity, who is there who could complain of having unconsciously received a glorious gift, simply because of some slight inconvenience arising therefrom, though not for a moment to be compared with the gift itself ? Now, this is precisely the case in question. If we have contracted certain obligations, without our knowledge, we have on the other hand become children of God and heirs of Paradise ; but where is the comparison between these two things—between the burthens we have to bear and the unending, immense reward ?

Besides this, every time we perform an action proper to a Christian, do we not thereby simply ratify those conditions on which we acquired the right to perform it, and hence to be recognized as a Christian ?

This much being premised to meet certain difficulties that are sometimes made, I now pass on to consider the obligations imposed by the profession and character of Baptism.

In the first place it obliges us to believe in God, and in all the truths revealed by Him. Hence, before admitting us to Baptism, the priest more than once made enquiries as to our faith : “ Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth ? Do you believe in Jesus Christ ? ” and so on ; and through the mouths of our sponsors we answered : “ I do believe.”

Now, the faith that is demanded of us is not a mere indefinite faith—it is a firm, generous, efficacious faith. *Firm*, excluding all perplexity, hesitation, and doubt regarding the articles proposed for our belief. *Generous*, banishing all feeling of shame when we have to make public profession of it, no matter who is present, and no matter

in what time or circumstances. *Efficacious*, corresponding in word and deed, and excluding us from the number of those censured by St. Paul because they confess God with their lips but deny Him with their deeds : *They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him.*¹ The lighted candle that the priest places in our hands after Baptism makes it sufficiently clear that the faith of a Christian should shine like a torch in the world, and shed around the living light of good example and of holiness.

But how can this be if we allow the world, the flesh, and the devil to acquire an evil influence over us ? This leads us to speak of the solemn promise, demanded of and made by us through our sponsors, to renounce the devil, and the world and all its vanities : “ Do you renounce Satan ? And all his works ? And all his pomps ? ” And we answered : “ I do renounce them ”—a promise called by the holy Fathers to show its importance, an agreement, a contract made with God, a solemn oath sworn to Him, a vow even, and the greatest of all vows—“ a promise,” says St. Ambrose, “ which was not only inscribed on the baptismal registers, but which was also written in the book of life, and the memory of which God will for ever preserve.”

Now, in what does this promise precisely consist ? In renouncing the devil we pledged ourselves never to return to his slavery by sin, and therefore never to entertain his vile suggestions, and vigorously to resist all the assaults of this insidious enemy who unceasingly urges us to do evil. And as for this purpose he very often tries to make use of our very selves and of our vicious passions, we also pledged ourselves at the same time to combat our evil passions and restrain our unregulated appetites and never allow ourselves to be conquered and subjected by them or him.

And in renouncing the world, what did we renounce ? Was it houses, family, country, the companionship of our fellow-man, to bury ourselves in a desert ? Oh, no. It is one thing to live in the world—another thing to live according to the world. We mean that world which is governed by maxims contrary to the Gospel—a world that revolves, as says St. John, on the three principal and baneful passions of pride, avarice, and lust ; *All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*²—a world that is the declared enemy of Christ, and therefore censured and cursed by Him. Now this is precisely the world we have renounced—the precepts and maxims of the world, the manners and customs of the world, the disorders and corruptions of the world—in a word, all that is the world and goes under the name of the world.

¹ Titus i. 16.

² 1 John ii. 16.

Now why is this renunciation of the world and of the devil demanded of us ? Because to be on their side is incompatible with being on the side of God, to whom the grace of Baptism has specially and unreservedly bound us ; because, as our Lord said, *no one can serve two masters*¹—at one and the same time no one can serve God and the devil, God and the world, God and the flesh.

And in the third place the Christian faith embraced by us obliges us to live to God and for God, and to lead a pure, holy, immaculate life. For this one and only end, says St. Paul, He has by the grace of Baptism chosen us in preference to countless others : *He chose us . . . that we should be holy and immaculate in His sight*.² Hence the same Apostle, writing to the newly-baptized, calls them by no other name than that of *saints*,³ just as if it was one and the same thing to be baptized and be a saint—to become a Christian and profess holiness.

So it is. The profession and the name of Christian is the profession and name of holiness and such holiness as becomes the character and lofty titles to which the grace of Baptism has raised us. Recall these to mind for a few moments, and contrast them with our obligations :—

1. By Baptism we are truly made children of God, and heirs of Paradise. We should, then, act towards God as true children, love Him as our Father, be obedient and subject to Him in all things—we should maintain the dignity of our lofty sonship by integrity of life, and not dishonour it by unworthy conduct ; should be inspired with thoughts and aims becoming the high end to which we are called, and hence raise our desires towards heaven, and not keep our eyes fixed on this earth, like the beasts that have no other destiny.

2. By Baptism we have also become brothers of Jesus Christ, ingrafted on, incorporated in, Him. We should, then, strive to acquire the greatest possible resemblance to Him, to become, as it were, so many copies of Him, through humility, meekness, and every kind of Christian virtue, so that, to use the expression of St. Paul, the life of Jesus Christ may be made manifest and resplendent in our conduct : *That the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies*.⁴ Nor should this doctrine cause any surprise—is not the name Christian derived from Jesus Christ ? It therefore means one who professes to embrace and follow the teaching and the example of Christ.

3. Finally by Baptism we have become *temples of the Holy Ghost*

¹ Matt. vi. 24.

² Eph. i. 4.

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 12.

⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

dwelling in us—we are consecrated to God by rites and ceremonies just the same as those used in the consecration of material temples—unctions, exorcisms, invocations. We should, then, regard and treat our souls and also our bodies as things sacred and consecrated, and hence preserve ourselves with inviolable purity, guard ourselves from every unbecoming thought, affection, and action, so that the spirit of God may be the principle, the motive, the rule of all our life and works: *Whosoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*¹

And now do we understand what it is to be a Christian? In one word it means living, shining, active faith; it means war against Satan, separation from the world, mortification of ourselves, conformity with Jesus Christ, love of God, desire of heaven—there you have the duties and obligations of a Christian. Nor should a picture such as this seem strange or exaggerated unless to those who know nothing of the Gospel, since the Gospel is full of such maxims. On these terms, and on no other, the door of God's Church was opened to us, and the grace of holy Baptism imparted to us.

But if these are truly the obligations imposed on us by Baptism, are we not constrained to confess that few indeed are the true Christians? For as you know there are various classes of Christians.

Many, as a result of an unregulated and vicious life, and through downright malice, go so far as to cast off the faith, retaining nothing more of their Christianity than the baptismal character which can never be lost; then follows aversion to God's house, to the sacraments, to the word of God, to the ministers of religion, to all that is venerable and sacred. There remains no longer any trace of religion and faith. Speak to those of God, of the soul, of sin, of Paradise, of hell, of eternity—you will be treated with mockery and derision as fools and simpletons. Is not this a formal renunciation of Baptism, a real apostasy from Christianity?

Others there are who preserve the true belief, but cease to practise it at all; they are only half-Christians, for they are merely Christians in belief, in theory, in intellect, but not in will, in work, in life. And, in truth, had they promised in Baptism to serve the world, the flesh and the devil, could they behave differently from what they are now? No, indeed, for their life, instead of being Christian, is altogether the life of an unbeliever and idolator.

Finally, there are those, and they are the majority, who, striving to accomplish the impossible task of squaring God with the world, and conscience with the passions, reduce all their Christianity to a few

¹ Rom. viii. 14.

purely material practices—visits to the church, masses, benedictions, and an occasional routine confession; but no true or solid piety. Their life is always in disorder, the soul always in an evil state, they are always far from God, and slaves of the world, now by one vice and now by another, now by one passion and now by another—shadows and ghosts of Christians with no real substance. Call them what you will, but God cannot recognize them as Christians. They are even in greater danger than the other two classes who can have no doubt they are outside the road to heaven—a fact that may serve as a stimulus to awaken them; while the third class cherish a vain and presumptuous hope on the score of their devotions, closing their eyes completely to the 'many substantial defects that are dragging them down to hell.

And now let us reflect for a moment how terrible will be the last great judgment for one who has been baptized and who has to present to the divine Judge nothing but the shameful abuse of so glorious a gift. Assuredly a Christian who leads an evil life is incomparably more guilty than an unbeliever, and this for many reasons:—(1) He shamefully dishonours the sublime dignity that distinguishes him in the sight of God, and thus his sins contract almost the nature of profanation and sacrilege, and undoubtedly involve an enormous excess of both abasement and ingratitude to God. (2) He breaks a solemn and sacred promise made to God, and hence acquires the evil character of liar, faithless and untrue. (3) He sins with greater knowledge and in face of the abundant aids, lights, and graces, with which Christianity copiously supplies him. The malice and the sin, then, being greater, greater also will be the punishment, and incomparably greater the weight of damnation. Nay, according to the words of Jesus Christ, the very idolators will rise up one day to confound and condemn the Christian: *The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it.*¹ For if they had been illuminated, ennobled, privileged as we are, they would have corresponded far better than we do: *For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sack-cloth and ashes.*² Hence idolators will be punished less severely, if for no other reason than because they have one sin less—the abuse of the lights and helps of the true religion.

In conclusion, here is the great point on which we should often and seriously reflect—that is on the strict and inviolable contract entered into by us, and on our consequent terrible responsibility

¹ Matt. xii. 41.² Matt. xi. 21.

before God. Let us then live ever mindful of His great mercy towards us, and let us seek to correspond thereto with fidelity.

To stir up our torpid faith, the practice suggested by St. Charles Borromeo is excellent, and it is to place ourselves in spirit from time to time, and especially on the anniversary day of our Baptism, at the sacred font where we were regenerated, and there with lively faith say within ourselves : " Here, years ago, the Lord delivered me from the slavery of the devil ; here He adopted me as His son, and made me heir to Paradise."

Thinking on this let us return Him thanks ; let us call to mind the obligations we contracted ; let us be filled with confusion and grief for having fulfilled them so imperfectly ; and finally let us renew our promises and resolve to be more faithful for the future.

CHAPTER III

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM—(continued)

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

VII.—THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM

REGARDING the effects of the sacrament of Baptism, they should be frequently explained in order that the faithful may more and more clearly realize the high dignity to which they have been raised, and never for a moment even allow themselves to be cast down therefrom by the wiles and assaults of the adversary. Accordingly they should be taught, first of all, that sin, whether contracted by birth from our first parents, or actually committed by ourselves, be it ever so abominable, even beyond the power of imagination, is remitted and pardoned by the wonderful power of this sacrament.

41.—(a) The remission of sin.

This effect was, ages before the Incarnation, foretold by the prophet Ezechiel, through whom the Lord God thus speaks: *I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness.* And the Apostle writing to the Corinthians,¹ after having enumerated a long catalogue of their sins, adds: *Such some of you were, but you are washed, you are sanctified.*² This, too, is the constant teaching of the Church. St. Augustine, in his book on the Baptism of Infants, thus testifies: "By the generation of the flesh original sin alone is contracted; but by the regeneration of the spirit is remitted not only original, but also actual sin." And St. Jerome, in his letters to Oceanus, writes: "All sins are remitted in Baptism." And in order to remove all further doubt on the subject, the holy Council of Trent, following the definition of the other Councils, professed the same teaching, when it decreed anathema against all those who should presume to hold any other opinion, or who should assert that sins though forgiven in Baptism, are not entirely removed or utterly eradicated, but are merely effaced in such a way that their roots still remain fixed in the soul; for, to use the words of

¹ Ezech. xxxvi. 25.

² 1 Cor. vi. 11.

the same holy Council¹: "In those who are regenerated, God hates nothing, because there remains nothing deserving condemnation in those who are truly buried together with Christ by Baptism unto death, and *who walk not according to the flesh,*² but *putting off the old man and putting on the new who is created according to God,*³ are made innocent and immaculate, pure, upright, and beloved of God."

42.—The guilt of concupiscence is remitted, but concupiscence itself, or the tendency to sin, remains.

We must, however, confess, in accordance with the decree of the same holy Synod, that concupiscence or an inclination to sin remains. But it is not sin; for, as St. Augustine observes: "In baptized children the guilt of concupiscence is absolved, but concupiscence itself remains to be combated." He repeats the same statement elsewhere: "In Baptism the guilt is pardoned but the weakness remains." For, concupiscence which is an effect of sin is nothing else than an appetite of the soul, which appetite is, in its own nature, repugnant to reason, and which, nevertheless, if not accompanied by the consent of the will, or by negligence, is very far from having the real nature of sin. And when St. Paul says: *I had not known concupiscence if the law did not say: Thou shalt not covet,*⁴ he meant, not concupiscence itself, but the fault of the will. St. Gregory taught the same doctrine when he wrote: "If there are any who say that in Baptism sins are forgiven merely superficially, what statement can be more untrue than this? For by the sacrament of Faith the soul adheres to God alone, and is freed from sins which are completely eradicated." In proof of this he adduces the testimony of our Saviour, who says in St. John: *He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly.*⁵

Should anyone, however, desire to see a striking figure and image of Baptism, let him consider the story of Naaman, the Syrian leper, who, having washed seven times in the Jordan, was, according to the testimony of Scripture, so cleansed from his leprosy that his flesh became *like the flesh of a child.*⁶

The proper effect, then, of Baptism is the remission of all sins whether original or actual. That it is precisely for this object that it was instituted by our Lord and Saviour has been stated in the clearest terms by the Prince of the Apostles (to omit

¹ Sess. V., cap. v. ² Rom. viii. 1. ³ Eph. iv. 22, 24. ⁴ Rom. vii. 7.
⁵ John xiii. 10. ⁶ 4 Kings v. 14.

other testimonies) : *Do penance, he says, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins.*¹

44.—(b) The punishment due to sin is also remitted. But in Baptism not only are sins remitted, but all the punishments due on account of sin are also mercifully pardoned by God. For although it is common to all the sacraments to communicate

the merits of Christ's passion, nevertheless it is of Baptism alone that the Apostle said *by it we die with Christ, and with Christ are buried.*² Hence, holy Church has always taught that those works called by the holy Fathers works of satisfaction cannot, without inflicting grievous wrong on the sacrament, be imposed on him who is still to be baptized.

Nor is this teaching contrary to the practice of the ancient Church, which obliged Jews, on being baptized, to fast for forty days. This regulation was not imposed by way of satisfaction, but those who were baptized were thus admonished to devote some time uninterruptedly to prayer and fasting in honour of so great a sacrament.

45.—Baptism does not exempt from civil law. Though it is certain that the punishments due to sin are remitted in Baptism, nevertheless no one is delivered thereby from those penalties that are meted out by civil tribunals to grievous crime ; thus, a person condemned to death is not through Baptism rescued from the penalty ordained by the law. At the same time, the religious piety of those princes who, to display the glory of God in the sacraments, should relax and remit the punishment due to the guilty, is deserving of the highest praise.

46.—Penalties inflicted after death. Furthermore, in reference to the life to come, Baptism effects complete liberation from the punishments due by us on account of original sin—a blessing we are enabled to attain through the merits of the death of our Lord. By Baptism, as has been said, we die with Him ; *For, says the Apostle, if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, in like manner we shall be of His resurrection.*³

47.—We are not freed from the temporal misfortunes consequent on original sin. Should anyone ask why, immediately after Baptism, we are not at once exempt in this life from suffering and misfortune, and restored by virtue of holy Baptism to that state of dignity and perfection in which Adam, the first parent

¹ Acts ii. 38.² Rom. vi. 3.³ Rom. vi. 5.

of the human race, was placed before his sin, the answer will be that this has been so ordained for two principal reasons.

And the first is, that to us who through Baptism are united to the body of Christ and made His members, greater dignity should not be conceded than was given to our Head. Now, if Christ our Lord, though full of grace and truth from the first instant of His incarnation, did not lay aside the frailty of the human nature He assumed until He had endured the torments of His cross and passion, and until He had risen again to the glory of immortality—who can wonder at seeing the faithful, who have received the grace of heavenly justification in Baptism, still clothed in a frail and mortal body, until that day when, having already borne much for the sake of Christ, and having passed through the gates of death, they shall have been called once more to life, and at length be found worthy to enjoy unending bliss with Christ?

The second reason why bodily infirmity, the sense of pain, and the motion of concupiscence, remain in us after Baptism is that we may, so to say, have the seeds and materials of virtue, from which to derive more abundant fruit of glory and more magnificent rewards. If we patiently endure all the ills of life, and with God's help subject all the evil inclinations of our hearts to the dominion of reason, assuredly may we confidently hope that the day will come when if with the Apostle we shall have *fought the good fight, finished our course, and kept the faith, the Lord the just Judge will render us on that day the crown of justice laid up for us.*¹ Thus it was that our Lord seems to have acted towards the children of Israel—though He had liberated them from the bondage of the Egyptians, and had drowned Pharaoh and his host in the sea, yet He did not lead them at once into the promised land, but first subjected them to many dangers and trials; and finally, when He did put them into possession of the promised land though He drove the greater part of its previous inhabitants out of the land of their fathers, yet other nations whom the new inhabitants were never able to destroy were allowed to remain, in order that God's people might always have occasion to exercise their warlike courage and fortitude.²

We may also add that if at Baptism bodily blessings were also bestowed along with the heavenly gifts adorning the soul, it might well be suspected that many would approach Baptism in hope of acquiring the goods of this life, rather than the glory

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

² Judges iii. 1.

of the life to come ; while it is not these false and uncertain goods which are seen, but the true and eternal which are not seen that should be ever before the eyes of the Christian.

48.—Special blessings granted to the regenerate. At the same time, however, the condition of this life, full as it is of miseries, is not without its pleasures and joys. For what can be more pleasing and desirable to us, who by Baptism have been engrafted like branches on Christ, than to take up our cross, follow Him as our Leader, and be wearied by no labours, nor hindered by no dangers from eagerly *pressing forward to the prize of the supernal vocation of God*¹—some to receive from the Lord the crown of virginity, others the crown of teaching and preaching, others the palm of martyrdom, others the choice gifts due to their virtues ; all which glorious titles could be given to none had we not first contended in the race of this calamitous life, and resolutely held our ground on the battle-field.

49.—(c) Sanctifying grace. To return to the effects of Baptism, it should be pointed out that by virtue of this sacrament we are not only delivered from those evils which are truly called greatest of all, but we are also enriched with choicest blessings and gifts—the soul is filled with divine grace whereby we are made just and become sons of God, and heirs to eternal salvation ; for it is written : *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*,² while the Apostle testifies that the Church is *cleansed by the laver of water in the word of life*.³ Now, according to the decree of the Council of Trent, which must be believed by all under pain of excommunication, grace is not only that means by which sins are remitted, but is also a divine quality inhering in the soul—a certain splendour and light, so to say, effacing all the stains of our souls, and making them more beautiful and glorious. This is plainly inferred from the Sacred Scriptures, when they say that grace is *poured forth* and when they usually refer to it as the *pledge of the Holy Ghost*.

50.—(d) Virtues are also infused in Baptism. With grace comes a noble train of all virtues, which are poured along with it into the soul. Hence, St. Augustine explaining the Apostle's words to Titus : *He saved us by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom He hath*

¹ Phil. iii. 14.² Mark xvi. 16.³ Eph. v. 26.

poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour,¹ says that the words *poured forth abundantly* mean "for the remission of sins and abundance of virtues."

By Baptism also we are united and joined as members to Christ our Head; and just as from the head springs the force by which the different parts of the body are enabled to discharge their functions properly, so in like manner from the fullness of Christ our Lord is diffused on all who are justified that divine virtue and grace which renders us capable of discharging the duties of Christian piety.

51.—(e) Incorporation with Christ our Head. Though thus furnished and adorned with such copious virtues, it should cause no surprise if it is only with great difficulty and labour we undertake, or at least execute pious and good actions.

52.—Why the practice of piety remains difficult. This does not mean that the virtues from which these pious actions spring are not bestowed on us by the bounty of God; but it means that even after Baptism there still remains a severe struggle *of the flesh against the spirit*, in which struggle, however, it ill becomes a Christian man to grow disheartened or faint. Relying on the goodness of God we should firmly hope that by the daily exercise of a good life the time will come when *whatsoever things are modest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever holy*,² will seem pleasant and easy to us. Let us, then, often meditate on these truths, let us cheerfully practice what they teach, that so *the God of peace may be with us*.³

Furthermore, by Baptism we are signed with a character which can never be blotted out from our souls. On this point, however, there is no need to speak at length here, since much that has been said already on the subject of the sacraments in general can be suitably applied to this place.

53.—(f) The character impressed in Baptism. As a consequence of the force and nature of the character, it has been defined by the Church that the sacrament of Baptism should on no account be repeated. Hence the faithful should be frequently and carefully warned by the pastor against falling into this error. Such is the teaching of the Apostle, when he says:

54.—Baptism not to be repeated.

¹ Titus iii. 5, 6.

² Phil. iv. 8

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

*One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.*¹ Again, in his exhortation to the Romans to take care that, being dead in Christ by Baptism, they lose not the life they had received from Him, when, he adds, *In that He died to sin He died once,*² he clearly seems to signify that as Jesus Christ cannot die again, so likewise neither can we die again by Baptism. Hence, holy Church openly professes that she believes in *one Baptism* only. And that this is highly in keeping with the nature of the sacrament and in accord with right reason, appears from the fact that Baptism is a spiritual regeneration. Just, then, as by the laws of nature we are generated and born but once, and, as St. Augustine says, "There is no returning to the womb," so also is there but one single spiritual regeneration, and Baptism is at no time to be repeated.

55. — Conditional Baptism. Nor should anyone imagine that the Church repeats it when she baptizes someone concerning whose Baptism there is any uncertainty, using this form: "If thou art baptized I baptize thee not again; but if thou art not yet baptized I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" for by this form of words we affirm that Baptism is not impiously repeated, but holily administered under condition.

56. — Conditional Baptism is to be cautiously administered. On this head, however, the pastor should carefully provide against certain abuses which, to the serious injury of the sacrament, are almost of daily occurrence. Persons are to be found who imagine they commit no sin when they administer conditional Baptism indiscriminately. Hence, if an infant is brought to them they never think about inquiring whether it has been previously baptized, but straightway give it Baptism; nay, even though fully convinced that the sacrament has been administered at home they nevertheless do not hesitate to repeat the sacred ablution conditionally along with the solemn ceremonies, a thing which cannot be done without committing a sacrilege, and without incurring that stain called by theologians, Irregularity; for, according to the authority of Pope Alexander, conditional Baptism is permitted to those only concerning whom, after careful enquiry has been made, there remains some doubt as to whether they have been duly baptized. In no other case is it ever lawful to administer Baptism a second time, not even conditionally.

¹ Eph. iv. 5.² Rom. vi. 10.

57.—(g) Baptism opens the gates of heaven to us. Now, besides all these advantages which we derive from Baptism, the last of all, and that to which all the others refer, is that it opens to each one of us the gates of heaven that had been heretofore closed by sin. For the rest, the effects wrought in us by virtue of Baptism may be clearly understood from what the Gospel authority assures us took place at the Baptism of our Saviour—the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost appeared descending in the form of a dove on Christ our Lord, signifying thereby that divine gifts are bestowed on those who are baptized, and that the gates of heaven are opened to them; not indeed that the newly baptized enter at once into that glory, but that at a more fitting time, when, freed from all miseries which can have no place in the life of bliss, they shall exchange their mortal life for one of immortality.

Such are the effects of Baptism—effects which, as far as the efficacy of the sacrament is concerned, are certainly common to all; but if we consider the dispositions of those who receive it we must unhesitatingly acknowledge that more (or less) of that heavenly grace is granted to some than to others.

VIII.—THE PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF BAPTISM

58.—The utility of the ceremonies of Baptism. It now remains to speak clearly and briefly of the prayers, rites, and ceremonies used in the sacrament of Baptism. The Apostle's admonition concerning the gift of tongues, when he says that it is useless to speak unless the faithful understand what is said,¹ may be applied to the rites and ceremonies of Baptism—for they present the visible image and signification of the invisible effects of the sacrament. But if the faithful do not know the force and meaning of those signs, little advantage can be derived from the ceremonies. The pastor, therefore, should endeavour to make the people understand them, and be convinced that though these ceremonies are not necessary, yet they are to be considered of no small importance, and should be held in great honour. The authority of those by whom they were instituted (who were unquestionably the holy Apostles), as well as the end for which they willed to have such ceremonies used, easily demonstrates this. By means of them, Baptism is administered with greater devotion and holiness, and the excellent and priceless

¹ 1 Cor. xiv.

gifts contained therein are, so to say, set before the eyes, and the sense of God's boundless benefits more deeply impressed on the minds of the faithful.

Now, all the ceremonies and prayers which are used by the Church in the administration of Baptism, should be reduced to three heads, so that in explaining them, the pastor may be able to follow a definite order, and his instructions thereon be the more easily retained in the memory of his hearers.

In the first place, then, come those ceremonies that are observed before arriving at the baptismal font ; then follow those used at the font ; and in the third place those that are added immediately after Baptism has been administered.

First of all the water to be used in Baptism must be prepared—the baptismal font is consecrated, and the oil of mystic unction is added. Nor may this be done at all times ; but, in accordance with ancient custom, certain festivals which are properly deemed specially solemn and holy are to be awaited ; the water of the sacrament is consecrated on the vigils thereof ; and on the same days and on them only (unless in case of necessity) it was the ancient custom of the Church to administer Baptism. And though in our times the Church, in consequence of the dangers incidental to the average life, has not thought fit that this custom should be still continued ; nevertheless, even down to our own day, she observes the solemn feasts of Easter and Pentecost most devoutly, on which days baptismal water is consecrated.

After the blessing of the water, the other ceremonies that precede Baptism should be explained. Thus, those who are about to be baptized are carried or brought to the door of the church, and are strictly forbidden to enter therein, on the ground that they are unworthy to come into the house of God until they have cast off the yoke of their degrading bondage, and dedicated themselves wholly to Christ our Lord, and to His most just dominion.

Then the priest demands what they ask of the Church, and on being answered by them, or by those who answer for them, he instructs them in the doctrine

of the Christian faith, which they are to profess in Baptism. This he does in a brief catechetical instruction—a custom which we know is derived from the command of our Lord and Saviour addressed to the Apostles: *Go ye into the whole world, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*¹ From this command we see that Baptism is not to be administered until at least the chief heads of our religion have been explained.

63.—Catechising of the more ignorant. But as the instruction in question is made up of many interrogations, the person who is to be instructed answers for himself, if he is of adult age; but if an infant the sponsor answers for him and makes the solemn promise required.

64.—Exorcisms. Then follows the exorcism, consisting of sacred and religious words and of various prayers to expel the devil and to weaken and destroy his power. To the exorcisms are added other ceremonies, all of which, being mystical, have a special and noteworthy signification.

65.—Salt. Thus, for instance, the salt which is put into the mouth of the person who is brought to be baptized clearly signifies that by the doctrine of faith and the gift of grace he shall be delivered from the corruption of sin, acquire a taste for good works, and be refreshed with the food of divine wisdom.

66.—The sign of the Cross. Along with this, the forehead, the eyes, the breast, the shoulders, and ears are signed with the sign of the Cross, to show that by the mystery of Baptism the senses of the person baptized are opened and strengthened to enable him to receive God and know and observe His commandments.

67.—Saliva. Next, his nostrils and ears are touched with saliva, and he is immediately sent to the baptismal font, to give us to understand that such is the power of that holy ablution that it gives us light to the mind to perceive heavenly truths, just as sight was restored to the blind man in the Gospel, whom our Lord ordered to wash his eyes, first smeared with clay, in the waters of Siloe.

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

When all these ceremonies have been completed they come to the baptismal font where the remaining rites and ceremonies are performed. Now in these we may briefly recognize the obligations contained in the Christian religion. Thrice does the priest expressly interrogate the person to be baptized : " Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his pomps ? " and to each of these interrogations he replies : " I do renounce them." He, therefore, who is about to join the army of Christ must first holily and religiously promise to abandon the devil and the world, and never for the future cease to detest both one and the other as his most deadly enemies.*

Then the priest standing at the baptismal font interrogates him as follows : " Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty ? " and he answers " I do believe ; " and on being similarly interrogated on the other articles of the Creed he solemnly and religiously professes his faith. In these two answers are contained the whole sum and substance of the law of Christ.

And now, when Baptism is about to be administered, the priest asks the person to be baptized whether it is his wish to be baptized, and on his answering yes, either of himself, or on the sponsor answering for him if he is an infant, the priest at once pours the saving water over him in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. For just as man of his own free will obeyed the serpent and was justly damned, so the Lord will have none but volunteers become His soldiers, so that by a willing obedience to His divine commandments they may attain eternal salvation.

As soon as Baptism is finished, the priest anoints with chrism the crown of the head of the person baptized, to show him that from that day forward he is united as a member to Christ the Head, and engrafted on His body, and that he is called a Christian from Christ, just as Christ is

* In some editions of the Roman Catechism, the following paragraph is found inserted in this place :—

The person to be baptized is next anointed with oil on the breast and between the shoulders—on the breast to show that through the gift of the Holy Ghost, he may reject ignorance and error, and receive the true faith, since *the just man lives by faith* (Gal. iii. 11); on the shoulders, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit he may drive away negligence and sloth, and dedicate himself to good works, since *faith without good works is dead* (James ii. 26).

named from chrism. The signification of chrism, as St. Ambrose remarks, can be sufficiently understood from the prayers which are then said by the priest.

72.—The white garment. The priest next puts a white garment on the baptized, saying: "Receive this white garment, and mayest thou carry it unstained before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that so thou mayest have eternal life." To infants, however, is given a white handkerchief, the same words being used. This symbol, the holy Fathers teach, signifies the glory of the resurrection to which we are born again by Baptism, as also the brightness and beauty with which the soul, now purified from the stains of sin, is adorned, and the innocence and integrity which he who has been baptized should preserve throughout the whole course of his life.

73.—The lighted taper. A lighted taper is next put into the hand to show that faith inflamed by charity which is received in Baptism is to be nourished and increased by the practice of good works.

74.—The name given in Baptism. Lastly, a name is given to the baptized. It should be taken from some one who is numbered amongst the saints for his eminent piety and virtues. The likeness of name will help to excite each one to imitate the virtues and holiness of the saint who bore that name and to pray and hope that he whom he strives to imitate will be his advocate and watch over the safety both of his soul and body.

Hence those are to be reprov'd who purposely select and bestow on their children heathen names, or names of those particularly who were conspicuously wicked. From this circumstance may readily be understood the value such persons set on the practice of Christian piety, when they seem to be so enamoured of the memory of impious men as to be ready to have the ears of the faithful ring with such profane names.

75.—Recapitulation. When all this has been explained by the pastor, nothing would seem to be omitted that can be regarded as necessary for a knowledge of this sacrament. It has been shown what the name of Baptism signifies, what is its nature, what its substance, and what its parts. It has been pointed out by whom it was insti-

tuted, who are its necessary ministers, and who are to be chosen as guardians to help the weakness of the person baptized. It has also been explained to whom Baptism should be administered, and what should be their dispositions ; what the virtue and efficacy of the sacrament ; and finally, as far as necessary, the rites and ceremonies to be used. The pastor should remember that all these things are to be taught for this purpose, that the constant care and thought of the faithful should ever be to be faithful to the promises they holily and religiously made at Baptism, and lead a life in keeping with the profession of Christianity.

Fifth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM

HAVING already seen the conditions necessary for the validity of the sacrament of Baptism ; having also discussed the obligations imposed on us by its reception, we now proceed to consider another very important point, and that is, the effects produced in us by Baptism,—a consideration highly calculated to make us sensible of the greatness of the benefit received.

The unhappy condition not only of the adults, but also of the infants, who present themselves for Baptism may be inferred from the various ceremonies performed by the Church before administering it—ceremonies you must have witnessed several times, but which, as a rule, are looked at through mere curiosity and often with a feeling of contempt, and seldom with the eyes of faith. Why is the person to be baptized stopped at the door of the church, or at least kept outside the baptismal font, before being admitted ? What is the meaning of all those exorcisms and exhortations and instructions gone through by the priest, and the command given to the devil to depart out of that poor creature ? What means the breathing thrice repeated over his face, like to that divine breath with which God, after having formed the body of Adam, infused therein the vivifying spirit—*He breathed into his face the breath of life* ? And that rubbing of his ears and nostrils with saliva, resembling what Jesus Christ did on the occasion when a man who was possessed, as well as deaf and dumb, was presented to Him ? And, finally, the repeated making of the sign of the Cross on the forehead—of that Cross which destroyed the empire of the devil ?

All these actions, and others also that are omitted for sake of brevity, denote clearly enough the miserable condition of the infant to be baptized—they denote that he is not worthy to be admitted into the number of the faithful, since being excluded from heaven, he should also be excluded from the Church, which is the figure of, and the introduction to, heaven ; they denote also that he is corrupted and foul with guilt, subject to the power and slavery of the devil, and hence in a condition of deafness, dumbness, blindness, and spiritual death from which he can only be liberated by the grace of Jesus Christ applied to

his soul in the sacrament of Baptism. In a word, all the ceremonies used by the Church are a confession—an authentic proof—of that sin which is transmitted from Adam to his descendants, and of the fatal results arising therefrom.

Yet, hardly is that infant touched by the saving waters of Baptism, hardly have the sanctifying words : “ I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” been pronounced over him when a swift change takes place in him. He acquires a new being—no longer an earthly and guilty one, such as is acquired by his birth from Adam—but heavenly and divine, such as is the life of Jesus Christ. Such, then, in a few words, is the efficacy of Baptism ; but in order to understand it still more clearly it will be useful to discuss its effects in detail.

The first effect of Baptism is the *remission of sins*—not only original sin but also all the actual sins that may have been committed by the person who is being baptized. Baptism blots out all the sins that are found in the soul—blots them out so completely that there does not remain the slightest stain—and restores him to the self-same degree of innocence and purity as was possessed by Adam when he sprung fresh from the hands of the Creator.

This, God had foretold by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel : *I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness.*¹ Hence the Apostle St. Paul, after having recounted to the people of Corinth a long list of their sins, added : *And such some of you were ; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*²

The second effect of Baptism is the *remission of all the punishment*, whether temporal or eternal, *due to sin*. In virtue of Baptism, the person baptized is no longer a debtor in any way to divine justice neither in this life nor the life to come ; so much is this the case that were he to die immediately after Baptism he would go straight to heaven without the slightest hindrance, because by Baptism the merits of Jesus Christ are applied to our souls without reserve or limitation : *There is now no condemnation to them, who are buried together with Him by Baptism unto death.*³

Hence it is that it has never been the practice of the Church to impose on adults who are being baptized any works of satisfaction such as are imposed on the faithful who approach the sacrament of Penance. This is, in fact, one of the principal differences between Baptism and Penance. Both sacraments do indeed remit sins but Baptism remits them gratuitously, leaving no satisfaction to

¹ Ezech. xxxvi. 25.

² 1 Cor. vi. 11.

³ Rom. viii. 1 ; vi. 4.

be paid ; while Penance as a rule changes eternal punishment into a temporal punishment to be undergone either in this life or in the life to come ; and this in accordance with the justice of God which demands that those who have been faithless to God, and who through their own fault have lost the grace received in Baptism, should be treated with greater severity.

At the same time we must not allow ourselves to imagine that an adult on being baptized is completely dispensed from all penance, for such a belief would be plainly opposed to the maxims of the Gospel which says to all without distinction : *Unless you shall do penance you shall all likewise perish.*¹ If we speak of an expiatory penance—a penance imposed for sins committed before Baptism and by Baptism blotted out, from such penances the person baptized is completely absolved ; but he cannot be dispensed from that penance which is called preservative, because it helps to avoid sins that may be committed in the future. No one has ever yet succeeded, and no one ever shall succeed in maintaining the beauty and brightness of his innocence for any length of time without the use and practice of Christian mortification. Hence, even the saints who were the most remarkable for innocence of life did not consider themselves exempt from practising penance. And besides, where would be the necessary conformity with Jesus Christ crucified, with whom, as St. Paul says, we are clothed in Baptism : *As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.*² The obligation and necessity of penance, therefore, always remain for other reasons besides those of satisfaction.

And all the more so since faith teaches that while sin and the punishment due to sin are blotted out in Baptism, yet that the consequences of original sin are not completely removed—amongst which we are to reckon not only corporal infirmities and miseries, and the necessity of dying, but also ignorance, concupiscence, inclination to evil, rebellion of our passions—unhappy relics that still survive within us, and compel us to hold ourselves ever prepared with arms in our hands to watch and combat. God, whose counsels are full of justice and wisdom, has willed that these effects should remain in us as a salutary reminder of our original fall and wretchedness, as an exercise of humility, as a test and trial of our fidelity, and as an occasion of our greater merit. But to comfort us He makes it plain to us that those effects cannot stain us with sin against our own wish ; that they can be overcome by the help of those aids to which the grace of Baptism gives us a special right ; and that finally we shall one day be completely freed from them by the grace of this sacrament which throws open the kingdom of heaven to us.

¹ Luke xiii. 3.

² Gal. iii. 27.

And this is a third effect of the sacrament—an effect which implies many other effects—sanctifying grace, the grace of purity, justice, and innocence, which renders us lovable in the sight of God, and which is symbolized by the white robe the Church puts on the newly-baptized; the grace of sweetness and strength represented by the unction which the Church makes with the oil on the breast and shoulders of catechumens; and finally, the grace which makes us *partakers of the divine nature*,¹ and unites us in a special alliance with the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in whose name we have been baptized.

Hence we become not only friends of God, dear to Him and ardently loved by Him, but real sons of God—not indeed sons by nature, as was Jesus Christ, but sons by adoption: *Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God.*²

In virtue of this divine sonship of adoption, we also become brothers of Jesus Christ, who does not disdain to raise us up and admit us to the honour of His divine brotherhood: *He is not ashamed to call them brethren.*³

Also we become the living temples of the Holy Ghost, who takes up His dwelling within us, adorns and sanctifies our souls with the divine habits of faith, hope, and charity, and with the infusion of the other supernatural gifts, and even regenerates our very bodies in which He plants the vivifying seed of a happy resurrection.

Finally, and in consequence of all this, we acquire a true and special right to enter one day into possession of the kingdom of God: *And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.*⁴ What priceless effects and blessings! But that is not all.

The fourth and last effect of Baptism is to imprint on us a holy and indelible seal—a spiritual seal, it is true, but still a real seal, which like a brilliant star is set in the soul of the person who has been baptized, and which we call the *character* of Baptism.

This character which is represented by the sacred chrism impressed on the forehead consecrates us specially to God, enrolls us amongst the ranks of the faithful, and distinguishes us from unbelievers in the same way as the consecration of a church distinguishes and separates that place from all profane edifices. Furthermore, in our capacity as faithful it gives us the right to the other sacraments, and makes us partakers of all the blessings and advantages enjoyed by the members of the true Church.

Such, then, are the choice effects wrought in us by Baptism,

¹ 2 Peter i. 4. ² 1 John iii. 1. ³ Heb. ii. 11. ⁴ Rom. viii. 17.

which is on that account well called the sacrament of *Regeneration*, of *Illumination*, of *New Life*. We were, says St. Paul, unfortunate children of our first parent, the heirs of their sin, slaves of the devil, enemies of God, eternally banished from the happy land of Paradise : *We were by nature children of wrath* ;¹ but from the moment when we were immersed in the new pool of Bethsaida that is so far better than the old one, all guilt and stain were laid aside, we received a new, supernatural and divine life, and we were raised to the great dignity of sons of God and hereditary princes of Paradise. Oh, inestimable grace and power of the sacrament, which is nevertheless so little valued by many Christians who would almost seem to consider it no great loss had they been always deprived of it !

To have some idea of the greatness of the benefit conferred by Baptism, it will be useful to estimate with the eye of faith the great difference that exists between a person who is baptized and one who is not. It is quite possible. We well know how to measure the distance between other objects of less importance. For example, if you should happen to see a man who has been blind from his birth, who is a cripple and deformed, who is an imbecile and simple, miserable and utterly wretched, you at once say in your heart, " Woe to me if God had made me be born in such a condition as that " ; and you at once understand the special mercy and the loving distinction used by God towards you, in making you be born in a different condition, sound and well-formed in person, and sufficiently provided with the world's goods, or at least with the industry and capacity to provide them. Yet all the corporal miseries and infirmities that can arise are not a hindrance to eternal salvation, and may even be means to attain it more easily.

Why, then, do we value so lightly the great gift given us by God in holy Baptism, in drawing us, in preference to others, out of a state not merely of temporal tribulation and misery, but of eternal damnation ? Without Baptism, there could be no salvation for us—this is the first grace of the way to salvation, this is the beginning and the foundation of all the other graces, this, then, is the greatest gift, and a gift all the more signal and precious because it has not been merited by us, and could not be merited by us. It was simply an effect of His gratuitous mercy that God made us be born in a Christian country, and led us to the grace of Baptism : *Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the laver of regeneration.*²

The consequence is plain and manifest—bear always the very

¹ Eph. ii. 3.

² Titus iii. 5.

highest esteem for the grace of Baptism. Let all who have the happiness to still possess it guard it diligently—as it is the greatest treasure of the soul, so is the loss of it the greatest misfortune that can happen. And though when lost it may be acquired again by the sacrament of Penance, yet it is not acquired with the same facility, nor certainty.

As for you, O parents, if you have any faith at all, there is nothing about which you should be more careful than in watching over the protection and preservation of the innocence of your children. You should receive them with greater joy when they are carried from the sacred font to the house, than when they first see the light—the first birth is a carnal birth, which they have in common with all, even brute creatures; while the second, which is acquired in Baptism is a spiritual and divine birth. Remember also that God and the Church entrust these dear pledges to you, that you may be their custodians and guardian angels. You are responsible for them and you must give a strict account of them.

Finally, each and every one of us should bear in mind, and ponder over, the words which, after Baptism, the priest addressed to us as he put over us the white cloth, signifying the grace conferred on us: “Receive this white garment, and mayest thou bear it stainless before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, that so thou mayest have life eternal.” Not less significant are the words which immediately follow, as he puts a lighted taper into the hands: “Receive this lighted lamp; preserve inviolable thy Baptism; keep God’s commandments, so that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials thou mayest be able to meet Him along with all the saints in the heavenly court, and thus possess eternal life, and live for endless ages.” Those are words we never should forget—they should be ever deeply graven on the heart, for they shall one day form the subject-matter of a strict investigation before the judgment-seat of God; and God grant that they do not contribute to our eternal reprobation and damnation!

Sixth Instruction on the Sacraments

BAPTISM: OBLIGATION TO DEDICATE ONESELF TO GOD FROM ONE'S TENDEREST YEARS

THE value of baptismal grace and the serious obligations it involves should serve as a strong encouragement to each one to remain faithful to God. And yet, how common is vice and depravation! At the dawn of reason, the impulses of age are soon marked by no light traces of vice and disorder, and to the greater number can be applied St. Augustine's tearful confession regarding his own case: "How few my years and how many my sins!"

I cannot, then, consider the subject of the obligations arising from Baptism concluded without directing a few words of exhortation to you, dear children, and young people, who listen to me, and pointing out the importance of dedicating yourselves to God, from your tenderest years—and that for two reasons assigned by St. Thomas, reasons that will now serve me as a guide, and they are: Our greater merit in the sight of God, and our own greater advantage. Observe that while this is not an instruction in the ordinary sense of the word, it will, however, be found to be a highly profitable appendix to what has been explained on former occasions—useful not only to you, but indirectly to the others present also.

In the first place I have observed that the service rendered by you to God will possess greater merit in His sight. "Service rendered to God in youth is the more pleasing to Him." I do not of course mean to assert that we cannot meritoriously devote ourselves to God in every age. Such and so great is His goodness that He does not refuse our service whenever we return to Him from the error of our ways, nor does He even despise the approaches of declining and decrepit old age. This He aimed at teaching us in the well-known parable of the labourers called by the master of the vineyard to cultivate it at different hours of the day, down even to the fall of the evening—a parable confirmed by the works and example of many who gave themselves to God in mature age and became shining lights of holiness. All that is true—most true. Yet, no one can deny that service rendered to God from our earliest years is particularly pleasing to Him.

In the first place, because thereby we offer to God first fruits which by their very nature are precious to Him—I mean the most beautiful, most innocent, and purest years of our lives. Who is there who does not appreciate and enjoy in a special way the favour and love of a person who deprives himself of the first and choicest fruits of his garden in order to present him with a gift and an offering? Even God Himself has ever shown Himself most desirous of such first fruits—in the Old Law He ordained that of the fruits of the earth, the first-born of animals; and of men, the oldest child of the family, should be offered to Him. All this was not without a mysterious purpose, but was intended to denote that our first years are specially dear to the Lord, and these He specially demands of us.

Moreover, in offering Him the first fruits of your years you make Him a most acceptable sacrifice, because you offer Him an age not only the most beautiful of all, but also an age that is tempted and allured beyond every other age. Let me explain. To give one's self to God after having long served the world, and after having by bitter personal experience discovered its vanities, its betrayals, its faithlessness, is certainly not a great gift; but you dedicate yourself to God at a time when you do not thus know the world, and when the world consequently presents itself to you smiling and entrancing, and pictures itself to your mind in images of pleasure and happiness. Now who is there who does not see the great difference in merit between both cases,—between renouncing a world known by experience to be lying, deceitful, tyrannous, and renouncing a world that still bears the character alone of unmixed pleasure, pure fascination, and unlimited promise of contentment and delight?

Hence arises another circumstance that renders such a gift still more acceptable to the Lord, and it is that it redounds to His greater glory because accompanied by greater edification towards others. Is it not true that there is no sight so tender and so moving in the eyes of all as to see a youth or maiden who do not allow themselves to be carried away by the current of bad example, and who in the midst of the impetuosity of youth, the attractions of the world, the impulses and allurements of every kind, know how to remain faithful to God, modest, chaste, prudent, and devout? Even worldly persons regard such as these with affectionate veneration and esteem—a veneration and esteem that are always a living and salutary reproof to themselves, and that can avail and sometimes do avail as an impulse and encouragement to imitate their example. Thus, St. Augustine confesses that the remembrance and the sight of so many innocent young men and maidens was what stung him to the quick, and

finally determined him to quit the filth of his passions: "Canst not thou do what they were able to do?"

From all these rapid reflections you will clearly see that the worship you pay to God in your tender years, as well as being precious in itself, cannot but be highly pleasing to God. But along with this, it will also be to your greater advantage—and this is the next point we have to reflect on.

First of all, it is so on account of the peculiar happiness that arises from the practice of the exercises of piety and devotion. You do not know now, and you cannot even imagine how difficult it is, to truly turn to God after having wasted your best years in the corruptions of vice, and in satisfaction of the passions. How many efforts must not be made to conquer evil habits, and shake off the masterful hold of an evil life, before becoming accustomed to piety that was neither known nor practised heretofore, and before renewing oneself and changing oneself in everything? Persons such as this feel by bitter experience the truth of the divine oracle that vice grows incarnate in the very bones: *His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth*,¹ as also of that other saying that it is as difficult to change life and habits as it is for the Ethiopian to change the native bronze of his skin: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin?*² Added to these intrinsic difficulties are other circumstances rendering the return of the heart to God always more impeded, involved and difficult—the ties of daily duty, the distractions of business, family cares, and the hundred bonds of human respect. Oh, how hard is the condition of a man who, now a hoary sinner bowed down under the weight of vicious habits, tries to recover the good path! Suffice it to say that in order to succeed St. Augustine had to sustain four years of combat and of fierce internal struggle, as he himself tells us in his *Confessions*.

But these difficulties are not for you who apply yourselves early to piety. Just as a tree while still young is easily bent in any shape, or just as soft wax easily receives that form that is to be impressed on it; so piety quickly takes root in a soil that is still virgin and is not yet ruined and depraved by evil maxims nor evil habits. I know that owing to original sin our nature is inclined to evil from our youth; but we must remember that the greater harm arises from a vicious life. In spite of the original fall and wretchedness there always remain in us certain seeds of inclination to good, to virtue, to rectitude, to honesty, which if not soon suffocated by vice, if cultivated diligently, never fail to blossom ere long into beautiful

¹ Job xx. 11.

² Jer. xiii. 23.

flowers and fruit. In confirmation and proof of this, I appeal to the example of many youths who correspond faithfully to the loving care of their parents.

And just as piety blossoms more easily in such hearts as these, so it is also easily maintained and preserved. For this, too, we have the clear testimony of Holy Writ : *A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*¹ The path a man pursues from his youth he will continue to follow in old age, for the virtues or the vices of earlier years are transmitted to the years that follow, and that which in the beginning was a matter of choice becomes little by little a second nature. True, the statement is not always nor invariably verified, yet it is verified in most cases, for experience shows that as it is rare to find persons improve who have been disorderly and dissolute in youth, so it is rare to find persons fall away who have lived a good life from their youth.

A young man who from his earliest years has laid a good foundation of morals and religion *shall not be moved*² says the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiasticus. With increasing years increase also his judgment and good sense, regularity of life, the proper distribution of his time, the fervour of his devotion, his taste for the things of God, and the conviction of a well-regulated conscience that shows him how to avoid the attractions and corruptions of the world and all evil inclinations thereto. You will see him attend now to his duties and occupations, now to his accustomed works of piety and religion, with greater pleasure than to the empty sights and attractions of the world which are always regarded by him with indifference and contempt.

And what is to be said of the special assistance, protection, and guidance to be expected by such as these from God ? If the worship paid Him in youth is an object of so much pleasure in His eyes, what doubt can there be that more abundant graces and blessings should not also be had from Him in consequence ? Circumstances then may change, years may change, occupations may change; but throughout all the varying occupations and times and changes, the good habits rooted from the first shall never change, but the grace of the Lord shall ever accompany you enabling you to advance with steady strides in years and piety, without ever turning one step aside from the right path—*he shall not be moved*.

Behold, then, the many solid reasons both on God's part and on your own why you should resolve to consecrate yourselves to Him from a tender age. They are all summed up by the Holy Ghost in this one sentence : *It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke*

¹ Prov. xxii. 6.

² Ecclus. xv. 3.

*from his youth.*¹ Oh, it is a thing good under every respect to accustom yourself to the yoke of the Lord, and to a virtuous life even from your youth !

I must not omit to observe here that nothing is more dangerous than to calculate on old age and on the years to come, which *the Father hath put in His power.*² This fallacious calculation deceives very many. They feel themselves in health, in vigour, and in robust strength, and they therefore make up their minds to enjoy themselves, calculating on being able to reserve their old age and their declining years to God. But who can assure them they will reach those years they have marked out for themselves ? Should not they be terrified by the frequent examples of persons cut off by death in tender age, in the prime of life, and sometimes by a death hastened by the vices to which they unfortunately have abandoned themselves ? Do not, then, rely on such unfounded and deceitful hopes as these.

Even so, granted that the Lord will be pleased to lengthen your years to the ripest old age, if you are persuaded, as you ought to be by faith, that your end is not here below, that your one great and only important business in this world is to save your souls, and that the world passes rapidly, will the choice merits you can acquire before God, and the greater facility you will have in entering on and maintaining a virtuous life, have no effect on your heart ? Nay, I have not yet referred to the greatest advantage arising from this course, which is the moral certainty of dying a good and holy death. "He who serves God from his youth," says St. Thomas, "departs this life sure of his salvation."

Oh, who can conceive, and who can express the Christian's tranquillity, joy, and hope in that bitter and awful moment of death when, looking back over his years, he is conscious he has tried from his youth to serve God, and that, with the exception perhaps of some passing errors that were soon repented, he has been faithful and true to his Master ! In that dreadful moment such a thought is so consoling that it is cheaply purchased at the cost of every sacrifice and every suffering during the brief course of our life.

Nay, even in the present order of things, his condition is happier, for St. Paul has declared that piety is useful for all things and carries with it every good hope both for this life and for the life to come : *Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*³ Peace of soul, the quiet progress of our affairs, public esteem, a good name which is the foundation of prosperity and of a successful career, and above all the blessing of

¹ Lament. iii. 27.

² Acts i. 7.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

the Lord—these are the choice fruits of a well-spent and virtuous youth; just as on the contrary, disorder, extravagance, loss of property and of health, a bad name, discord, strife, perpetual trouble, are the usual consequences of an unregulated and vicious youth. Can this be doubted with so many daily examples before our eyes?

I shall conclude with that remarkable advice of the Holy Ghost, which is specially directed to you : *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come.*¹ Remember your Creator in the time of your youth if you wish to save yourself from the days, that are sure to come, of trial, affliction, regret, and not seldom useless regret. Do not be led away by the bad example of your companions, the allurements of this world, the attractions of the day, much less by the fatal insinuations of the demon to yield for a time to evil inclinations and then repent and follow the right path once more; for you will find yourself carried further than you had counted on, and you will learn one day that it is not so easy to turn back from the course you have followed.

Bearing these motives in mind, aim steadily from henceforth at the service and worship of God, who is the Sovereign Lord of all men, all times, all ages, and enter on the practice of piety now while nature is pliable and vice has not scattered its baneful seeds within you, or if sown they have not yet taken root. This is the way—the only way—to render yourselves pleasing both to God and man, the delight of heaven and earth, happy in this life as far as one can be happy, and happy for ever after throughout the endless ages of eternity.

¹ Eccles. xii. 1.

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

IF ever the pastor's diligence was called for in the explanation of the sacrament of Confirmation, assuredly is it specially necessary at the present day when this sacrament is completely omitted by many even in God's holy Church, and when few are found who endeavour to derive therefrom the fruit of divine grace which they should derive from it. Accordingly, lest this divine blessing may, through their own fault and to their very serious injury, be bestowed on them in vain, the faithful should be instructed on the nature, dignity, and virtue of this sacrament, both on Whit Sunday on which day it is specially administered, and also on such other days as the pastor shall judge suitable, in order that they may understand not only that it is not to be omitted, but also that it is to be received with the greatest fervour and devotion.

1.—Its explanations highly necessary at the present day.

I.—CONFIRMATION A TRUE SACRAMENT

Beginning with the name, it should be shown that this sacrament is called Confirmation by the Church for this reason, that a baptized person on being anointed with sacred chrism by the bishop, who at the same time uses solemn words: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," will, if nothing else intervenes to impede the efficacy of the sacrament, be made stronger with the strength of the new grace he receives, and become a perfect soldier of Christ.

2.—Why called Confirmation.

3.—Confirmation is a true sacrament. The teaching of the Popes.

In Confirmation the Catholic Church has always recognized and confessed that there is found the true and real nature of a sacrament. Pope Melchiades and several other holy and ancient Pontiffs unmistakably proclaimed this—amongst others St. Clement, who could not have declared the truth of this doctrine in weightier words than he uses when he says: “Each one should hasten, without any delay, to be born again of God and then to be signed by the bishop, that is to say, receive the seven-fold grace of the Holy Ghost. He cannot for a moment be considered a perfect Christian who wilfully, and negligently and without any necessity omits to receive this sacrament. Thus it has been handed down to us by St. Peter; thus the other Apostles, inspired by God, have taught.” This same faith, too, the Popes Urban, Fabian and Eusebius who animated with the same spirit, shed their blood for the name of Christ, confirmed by their teaching as may be seen from their decrees.

4.—The teaching of the Fathers.

To this should be added the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, amongst whom Denis the Areopagite, Bishop of Athens, when explaining how this holy ointment should be made and used, says: “The priests clothe the person baptized with a garment in conformity with his state of innocence (and grace) before leading him into the presence of the bishop, who signs him with holy and truly divine unction and makes him partaker of the most holy communion.” Also Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, attributes such importance to this sacrament that he did not hesitate to say that Novatus the heretic could not have received the Holy Ghost because he had been baptized during a severe illness, and consequently had not been signed with the seal of chrism. On this head, however, we have the unmistakable testimony of St. Ambrose in his book on the *Initiated*, and of St. Augustine in his book written against the Epistles of the Donatist Petilian. Both of these saints were so convinced of the absolute truth of this sacrament that they even expounded and proved it by scriptural passages. One of them states that to the sacrament of Confirmation apply the words of the Apostle: *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption*,¹ the other that passage in the Psalms: *Like the precious ointment on the head, that ran*

¹ Eph. iv. 30.

down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron ;¹ and also that other passage of the Apostle : The Charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.²

5.—Difference between Baptism and Confirmation. Though Baptism was said by Melchiades to be very closely connected with Confirmation, yet it must not be regarded as the same sacrament, but altogether another and a different sacrament. It is an established fact that the difference in grace given by each sacrament, and the difference between the signs used to signify that grace, clearly prove that they are distinct and different sacraments.

Just, then, as by the sacrament of Baptism men are begotten to a new life ; so by the sacrament of Confirmation those who are already begotten grow to be perfect men *having put away the things of a child.*³ Hence it is clear that there is just as much difference between Baptism which regenerates and Confirmation by which the faithful grow and attain perfect spiritual strength, as there is between birth and growth in the natural life.

Besides, as there must be a new and distinct sacrament for each new class of difficulty the soul has to face, it will be seen that just as we need the grace of Baptism to infuse faith into the soul, so also do we know that it is highly advantageous that the souls of the faithful be strengthened by another kind of grace, in order to be deterred by nothing—neither fear of pains, tortures, nor death—from the confession of the true faith. Now, since this effect is produced by the sacred chrism of Confirmation, it is clearly inferred therefrom that the nature of this sacrament is different from that of Baptism. Hence Pope Melchiades expresses the difference between them accurately, when he writes : “ In Baptism man becomes enlisted in the army ; in Confirmation he is armed for battle. In the font of Baptism the Holy Ghost imparts to innocence the plenitude of grace ; in Confirmation He furnishes perfection to grace. In Baptism we are regenerated unto life ; after Baptism we are strengthened for the combat. Regeneration of itself saves during times of peace those who receive Baptism ; but Confirmation arms and prepares for war.” This teaching has not only been given by the other Councils, but has been specially defined by the Council of Trent, so much so that we are now no longer at liberty, not only to hold no other opinion, but not even to entertain the least doubt on the point.

¹ Ps. cxxxii. 2.² Rom. v. 5.³ 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

6.—The Author of Confirmation. But since, as already pointed out, it is highly necessary to explain from whom the sacraments in general have had their origin, so also should the same point be set forth regarding Confirmation in order that the faithful may be more and more impressed with the sanctity of this sacrament.

Accordingly the pastor should show that Christ our Lord was not only the Author of Confirmation, but as Pope St. Fabian witnesses, He also it was who prescribed the rite of chrism and the words used by the Catholic Church in its administration. To those who acknowledge Confirmation to be a sacrament this can easily be made clear from the fact that all the sacred mysteries are above the powers of human nature and can be instituted by none but by God Himself.

II.—MATTER AND FORM OF CONFIRMATION

7.—The matter of this sacrament is chrism. We now come to speak of the parts of Confirmation, and first of all of its matter which is called chrism—a Greek word used by profane writers to denote any sort of ointment, but commonly restricted by sacred writers to signify that ointment only which is made of oil and balsam solemnly consecrated by the bishop. Hence a mixture of two material things supplies the matter of Confirmation—which mixture of different things signifies the manifold grace of the Holy Ghost conferred on those who are confirmed. It also shows forth the excellence of the sacrament.

That such is truly the matter of the sacrament, holy Church and her Councils have always taught. This teaching has been handed down by St. Denis and several others of the most authoritative Fathers, especially by Pope Fabian who testifies that the Apostles received the composition of chrism from the Lord and handed it down to us.

8.—Why oil was chosen. And indeed to declare the effect of this sacrament no other matter could be more appropriate than chrism. Oil, which is fat, and naturally spreads and flows, expresses the plenitude of grace which, through the Holy Ghost, flows down on us from Christ our Head, and is poured over us, *like the ointment on the head, that ran down upon the beard of Aaron, to the skirt of his*

garments;¹ for God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above all His fellows;² and of His fullness we all have received.³

9.—And why balsam. As for the balsam, the odour of which is agreeable in the highest degree, what else does it signify but that the faithful when made perfect by the sacrament of Confirmation spread around them the sweetness of all virtues, so that they are able to say with the Apostle: *We are unto God the good odour of Christ.*⁴ Balsam has, moreover, the property of warding off corruption from whatever is anointed with it—a property highly adapted to denote the virtue of this sacrament. For it is abundantly evident that the souls of the faithful when prepared by that heavenly grace which is imparted in Confirmation are easily protected against the contagion of sin.

10.—Chrism to be consecrated by bishops alone. Chrism is consecrated by the bishop with solemn ceremonies. Fabian, a Pope renowned for his saintly life and glorious martyrdom, tells us that our Saviour thus ordained at the Last Supper when He committed it to His Apostles. Why it should be so, may be shown from reason itself. In most of the other sacraments Christ selected a matter which He Himself had sanctified. Thus not alone did He will to appoint water to be the matter of Baptism when He said: *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,*⁵ but He also, at His own Baptism, gave to water the power of sanctifying for the future. Hence St. Chrysostom notes: “The water of Baptism could not wash away the sins of believers if it had not been sanctified by contact with our Lord’s body.” Now since our Lord did not consecrate this matter of Confirmation by His own use or touch, it necessarily follows that it must be consecrated by holy and sacred prayers—a consecration that can appertain to none but a bishop who has been appointed the ordinary minister of this sacrament.

11.—The form of this sacrament. The other constituent part of Confirmation—the form and the words to be used at the anointing—should also be explained, and the faithful be admonished that at the reception of this sacrament when they hear these words pronounced they should

¹ Ps. cxxxii. 2. ² Ps. xliv. 8. ³ John i. 16. ⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 15. ⁵ John iii. 5.

particularly excite their minds to sentiments of piety, faith, and religion, so as to permit no obstacle to stand in the way of heavenly grace.

The form, then, is composed of the words: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here again an appeal to reason easily confirms this truth. For the form of the sacrament must comprise all that goes to explain the nature and substance of the sacrament itself.

12.—It is a perfect form.

Now in Confirmation there are chiefly three things to be observed—the divine power operating as principal cause in the sacrament, the strength of mind and soul imparted by the sacred unction to the faithful towards their salvation, and the seal impressed on him who is about to take part in the combat waged by the army of Christ.

Now the first of these three is clearly indicated by the words which come last in the form: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" the second, by the words in the middle of the form: "I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation;" and the third by the words in the beginning of the form: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross." In any event, even if it could not be proved by reason that this is the true and perfect form, the authority of the Catholic Church, under whose guidance we have been taught, leaves not the smallest room for doubt on the point.

III.—THE MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION

13.—The minister of Confirmation.

The pastor should also show to whom it is that the administration of this sacrament has been specially committed. *There are*, according to the Prophet, *many who run without being sent*.¹ It is therefore necessary to explain who are the true and legitimate ministers of Confirmation, in order that the faithful may be enabled to receive its grace and effects.

Now Holy Writ shows that the bishop alone is the ordinary

¹ Jer. xxiii. 21.

minister of this sacrament. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles we read that when Samaria had received the word of God, Peter and John were sent to them, and *prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for He was not as yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized.*¹ In this passage we may see that he who had baptized them, being only a deacon, had no power of confirming them; but that this office was reserved for the more perfect order of ministers, that is, the Apostles. The same point may be noticed whenever Holy Scripture mentions this sacrament.²

14.—The witness
of the Fathers.

In further proof, we have also the clearest testimony of the holy Fathers and of Popes Urban, Eusebius, Damasus, Innocent, and Leo, as may be seen from their decrees. While St. Augustine complains seriously of the corrupt practice of the people of Egypt and Alexandria whose priests presumed to administer the sacrament of Confirmation.

And that it is right and reasonable that this office has been limited to bishops, the pastor will be able to show by an example. In the building of a house it is the artisans (who are the inferior agents) who prepare and arrange mortar, lime, wood, and so on; yet it is to the architect that the completion of the work belongs. In the same way this sacrament, by which the spiritual life is so to say completed, should be administered by none other than by the bishop.

15.—Sponsors.

There must also be a sponsor, just as in Baptism. If those who prepare for the gladiatorial combats need some one to show them, by his skill and advice, the strokes and feints by which to wound the enemy while remaining safe themselves; much more will the faithful need a leader and adviser when, covered, as it were, and armed with the strong armour of this sacrament, they enter on the spiritual combat, the reward whereof is life eternal. Rightly, then, are sponsors to be admitted to the administration of Confirmation also; and they contract a spiritual affinity which prevents lawful marriage between the parties, just as has been already explained in the case of sponsors admitted in Baptism.

¹ Acts viii. 15, 16.

² Acts xix. 6.

IV.—NECESSITY OF CONFIRMATION

16.—The subject of Confirmation. It frequently happens that in receiving this sacrament the faithful are either too hurried, or grossly negligent, or procrastinating (not even to mention those who are grown so impious as to utterly despise it). Hence the pastor will also explain the persons, their age, and their dispositions, to whom Confirmation ought to be administered.

And first he must show that Confirmation is not so absolutely necessary that no one can be saved without it. Yet though not thus necessary, it ought to be omitted by none—very great care should be taken to avoid any sort of negligence in connexion with a matter which is so full of holiness and through which the gifts of God are so liberally given us. Whatever God has proposed for the sanctification of all should also be eagerly desired by all.

17.—All should be confirmed. And, in fact, St. Luke, describing this wonderful effusion of the Holy Spirit, says: *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting*¹ and (a little further on) he adds, *they were filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Now, as that house bore a type and figure of holy Church it will be gathered from these words that the sacrament of Confirmation which dates from that day pertains to all the faithful.

The same conclusion may easily be drawn from the nature of the sacrament itself. All those who stand in need of spiritual increase, and who should tend to the perfection of the Christian religion, ought to be confirmed with the sacred chrism. Now there is no one to whom this does not closely apply. Just as nature intends that all those who are born into the world should grow up and reach maturity, even though at times her design is not accomplished; so the Catholic Church, our common mother, earnestly desires that the form of a Christian man should be perfected in all those whom she has regenerated by Baptism. Now, as this is accomplished by means of the sacrament of mystic Unction, it is clear that this sacrament should be received by all.

¹ Acts ii. 2.

18.—Age at which
to receive Con-
firmation.

It should be observed, however, that while the sacrament of Confirmation may be administered to all who have been baptized, yet it is not expedient to administer it to children who have not yet attained the use of reason. Hence if it does not seem well to defer it to the twelfth year, it is highly proper to defer it at least to the seventh year. The reason is that Confirmation has not been instituted as necessary to salvation, but in order that through its virtue we may be found ready and prepared when called upon to fight for the faith of Christ—a combat which no one can for a moment consider that those who still want the use of reason are called on to sustain.

19.—Reverence
with which
Confirmation
should be ap-
proached.

From what has been already said, it follows that persons of mature age when about to be confirmed must, if they desire to receive the grace and gifts of this sacrament, not only approach it with faith and devotion, but must also be sorry from their hearts for all the serious sins they may have committed. Hence the pastor must strive to exhort them to make a previous confession of their sins, and excite them to fasting and other works of piety, and admonish them to revive that laudable practice of the ancient Church, by virtue of which only those who were fasting received this sacrament—to all of which we cannot but consider it will not be difficult to persuade the faithful if they shall only once have understood the wonderful effects of this sacrament and the graces it confers.

V.—THE EFFECTS OF CONFIRMATION

20.—The effects of
Confirmation.

The pastor will, accordingly, show that Confirmation has this in common with the other sacraments that, unless some obstacle is interposed by the person who receives it, it imparts new grace; for, as has been already explained, all the sacraments are sacred and mystical signs which both denote and produce grace.

(a) But besides what it has in common with the other sacraments, it is special to Confirmation to perfect the grace of Baptism. Those who have been made Christians by Baptism are, like newly-born infants, still weak and soft, but afterwards through the sacraments of Confirmation are strengthened against the assaults of the world, the flesh, and

the devil, while their minds are fully confirmed to confess and glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence doubtless the origin of the very name (of Confirmation).

21.—The word Confirmation—whence derived. For the word *confirmation* is not derived—as some ignorantly as well as impiously have asserted—from the fact that formerly those who had been baptized in their infancy, were, when grown to mature age, conducted before the bishop to *confirm* the profession of faith undertaken by them in Baptism, and thus Confirmation would seem to differ in no way from catechetical instruction. No trustworthy testimony can be adduced in support of this view. On the contrary, the name has been given owing to the fact that by virtue of this sacrament God confirms in us the work began by Him in Baptism, and conducts us to the perfection of solid Christian virtue.

(b) (The second effect of Confirmation is that) not only does it confirm, but it also gives growth in grace. On this point Melchiades testifies: “The Holy Ghost by His saving descent, comes down on the waters of Baptism, and in the font imparts plenitude of grace to innocency; but in Confirmation He gives increase to grace.” And not only does He increase grace, but He increases it in a wonderful manner, as the Holy Scriptures beautifully signified and expressed by the figure of a garment; *Stay you in the city*, says our Lord speaking of this sacrament, *until you be clothed with power from on high*.¹

22.—Effect of Confirmation on the Apostles. But if the pastor wishes to point out the divine efficacy of this sacrament (and his doing so cannot but have the greatest influence in touching the hearts of the faithful), it will be sufficient for him to explain what occurred in the case of the Apostles themselves. Up to the time of the passion, and even during the very hours of the passion itself, they were so weak and timid that on our Lord being seized they instantly ran away; while Peter, who had been marked out as the rock and foundation of the Church, and who had displayed the highest constancy and the greatness of a generous soul, was terrified at the voice of one simple woman, and denied not once or twice, but even a third time, that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ; and even after the resurrection they remained shut up in a house *for fear of the Jews*.² But on the day of Pentecost they were all so filled

¹ Luke xxiv. 49.

² John xx. 19.

with the power of the Holy Ghost that in disseminating freely and boldly the Gospel entrusted to them not only throughout Judea, but through all the world, they considered that no greater happiness could befall them than to be *accounted worthy to suffer*¹ reproach, chains, torments, and crosses for the name of Christ.

Confirmation has also this effect that it imprints a character and can, consequently never be repeated on any account, just as has been already remarked in the case of Baptism, and as will also be set forth later on in the case of Holy Orders.

If all this is frequently and carefully explained by the pastor, it will be almost impossible for the faithful, when once they recognize the excellence and advantage of this sacrament, not to use their utmost endeavours to receive it devoutly and religiously.

VI.—THE CEREMONIES OF CONFIRMATION

It remains now to give a brief glance at some of the rites and ceremonies used by the Catholic Church in the administration of this sacrament. The pastor will readily understand the advantage arising out of this explanation, if he reverts to what has been already said on this subject.

Those, then, who are confirmed are anointed on the forehead with holy chrism. For in this sacrament the Holy Ghost infuses Himself into the souls of the faithful, and increases within them strength and courage to enable them to fight manfully in the spiritual combat and withstand their bitter foes. The anointing made on the forehead signifies that they are not to be deterred from the open profession of the name of Christ by either fear or shame—the signs of which, as a rule, manifest themselves chiefly on the forehead.

Moreover the mark by which a Christian, like a soldier, is distinguished from others by certain badges should be impressed on the noblest part of the body.

The custom has been solemnly and religiously observed in the Church of God to administer this sacrament at Pentecost especially, because it was on that day that the Apostles were

¹ Acts v. 41.

strengthened and confirmed by the power of the Holy Ghost, in memory of which fact the faithful might be admonished to reflect on the many and great mysteries contained in the sacred anointing.

26.—The stroke on the cheek, and the invocation of peace. The person anointed and confirmed is then lightly struck on the cheek by the bishop, to put him in mind that like a valiant soldier he must be ready to endure all adversities with unconquered spirit for the name of Christ.

And lastly the peace is given him, that he may understand he has attained the fullness of heavenly grace and *that peace which surpasseth all understanding*.¹

This, then, is an outline of what the pastor should teach regarding the sacrament of chrism—not so much in empty words and speech, as in burning zeal for true piety, so as to imprint what he teaches on the souls and inmost thoughts of the faithful.

¹ Phil. iv. 7.

CHRISM OR CONFIRMATION

Q. What is the sacrament of Confirmation ?

A. Confirmation is a sacrament which gives us the Holy Ghost, imprints on our souls the mark of a soldier of Jesus Christ, and makes us perfect Christians.

Q. How does the sacrament of Confirmation mak us perfect Christians ?

A. The sacrament of Confirmation makes us perfect Christians by confirming us in the faith and perfecting the other virtues and gifts received in Baptism ; hence it is called Confirmation.

Q. What gifts of the Holy Ghost are received in Confirmation ?

A. The gifts of the Holy Ghost received in Confirmation are these seven : Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and the Fear of the Lord.

Q. What is the matter of this sacrament ?

A. The matter of this sacrament, besides the imposition of hands by the bishop, is the anointing of the forehead of the baptized with sacred chrism ; and for this reason it is also called the sacrament of Chrism, that is Anointing.

Q. What is sacred chrism ?

A. Sacred chrism is oil of olives mingled with balsam, and consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday.

Q. What do the oil and balsam in this sacrament signify ?

A. In this sacrament the oil, which spreads and strengthens, signifies the abounding grace which is diffused over the soul of the Christian to confirm him in his faith ; and the balsam, which is

fragrant and prevents corruption, signifies that the Christian, strengthened by this grace, is enabled to give forth a good odour of Christian virtue and preserve himself from the corruption of vice.

Q. What is the form of the sacrament of Confirmation ?

A. The form of the sacrament of Confirmation is this : *I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

Q. Who is the minister of the sacrament of Confirmation ?

A. The ordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation is the bishop alone.

Q. How does the bishop administer Confirmation ?

A. In administering the sacrament of Confirmation the bishop first stretches his hands over those to be confirmed, and invokes the Holy Ghost upon them ; next, he anoints the forehead of each one with sacred chrism in the form of a cross, saying the words of the form ; then he gives each one confirmed a light stroke on the cheek with his right hand, saying : *Peace be with you* ; finally, he solemnly blesses all those he has confirmed.

Q. Why is the anointing made on the forehead ?

A. The anointing is made on the forehead, where signs of fear and shame appear, in order that he who is confirmed may understand that he should not blush at the name and profession of a Christian, nor fear the enemies of his faith.

Q. Why is a light stroke given to the person confirmed ?

A. A light stroke is given to the person confirmed to show him that he should be ready to bear all insults and endure all sufferings for the faith of Jesus Christ.

Q. Should all endeavour to receive the sacrament of Confirmation?

A. Yes, all should endeavour to receive the sacrament of Confirmation and to have those under them receive it.

Q. At what age is it advisable to receive the sacrament of Confirmation?

A. The age at which it is advisable to receive the sacrament of Confirmation is about the seventh year, because it is then that temptations usually begin, and the grace of the sacrament can be sufficiently discerned and a recollection be had of having received it.

Q. What dispositions are required to receive worthily the sacrament of Confirmation?

A. To receive worthily the sacrament of Confirmation it is necessary to be in the grace of God; know the principal mysteries of our holy faith; and approach it with reverence and devotion.

Q. Would he who received Confirmation a second time be guilty of sin?

A. He would commit a sacrilege; because Confirmation is one of the sacraments that imprint a character on the soul and hence may be received only once.

Q. What should a Christian do to preserve the grace of Confirmation?

A. To preserve the grace of Confirmation a Christian should pray often, do good works, and live according to the laws of Jesus Christ, in spite of human respect.

Q. Why also are there godfathers and godmothers in Confirmation?

A. In order that they by word and example may show the confirmed the way to eternal life and help him in the spiritual combat.

Q. What qualifications are required in sponsors?

A. They should be of proper age, Catholics, confirmed, instructed in the necessary truths of religion, and persons of good life.

Q. Does a sponsor in Confirmation contract any relationship with the confirmed and the parents of the confirmed?

A. The sponsor in Confirmation contracts the same spiritual relationship as is contracted in Baptism.

Seventh Instruction on the Sacraments

CONFIRMATION

AFTER the sacrament of Baptism, which has been already explained, comes the sacrament of Chrism, which is also called Confirmation, because it confirms, perfects, and strengthens that which Baptism has commenced in us.

It is not enough to have received the spiritual life that is given in Baptism. This blessing is indeed sufficient for children who die before the use of reason, but not for those who survive and who are exposed to so many dangers of losing grace. Who can count the number of these dangers?—dangers within us, and dangers without. *Within us*, through our passions which grow with increasing years, and through that depth of corruption which not rarely anticipates mature years. *Without us*, through bad companions, contagious examples, evil maxims and insinuations. Oh, how easy it is for childhood, thus weak and inexperienced, to turn to evil soon! And if the beginning is bad, what will the consequences be? Children, then, even though baptized, stand in need of a new remedy to invigorate the spiritual life which is received in Baptism, and which is too weak and feeble to support itself alone.

In the order of grace we must reason along the same lines as in the order of nature. Just, then, as it is not enough for a child to be born—he must also grow and be strengthened, since even though he possess a true natural life, yet is he weak and unable to protect himself; so also it is not enough for a Christian to be born spiritually in Baptism, but along with this he needs to be strengthened in the spiritual life so as to be able to preserve it and withstand the dangers that incessantly threaten to rob him of it.

This maturity and strength are prepared for us by our Lord in the sacrament of Confirmation, which is hence called the complement and perfection of Baptism. Clear mention is made of it in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that the Apostles dwelling at Jerusalem, having heard that the deacon Philip had won many of the Samaritans to the Gospel, and had baptized them, sent thither Peter and John in order that the newly-baptized might be confirmed,

and receive the Holy Ghost ; and this in fact happened : *They laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost.*¹

Here we see, in practice, the administration of this sacrament—an account which is sufficient to prove its divine institution, even though the date when it was instituted is not precisely known. Certain it is that the Apostles never constituted themselves the authors but only the dispensers of the sacraments—*dispensers of the mysteries of Christ*;² and it is furthermore certain that God alone could attach to material and sensible signs the power of producing spiritual grace.

The sacrament of Confirmation, then, is a sacrament which confers the Holy Spirit, with the abundance of His graces, on the baptized, rendering them perfect Christians, and enabling them to confess at all costs the faith of Jesus Christ.

According to the common opinion, which is also based on custom and practice, the *matter* of this sacrament is the anointing with sacred chrism made on the forehead ; and the *form* consists in these words which accompany the anointing : “ I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

At the same time we should not forget to mention that others hold that what is essential is the imposition of hands, which the bishop makes in the beginning over all who are to be confirmed—an action denoting the descent of the Holy Ghost who thus comes to rest on the persons confirmed ; and the prayer which he pronounces at the same time, and which denotes the gifts and graces the Holy Ghost infuses over their hearts. In this view, those who intend to be confirmed should not omit to be present during the imposition of hands and its accompanying prayer. And, even though there were no question of assuring the validity of the sacrament, it will be always advisable to be present since the Council of Trent has expressly declared that the bishop does not in vain repeat the words : “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost ”—words that are said only at the beginning of the function.

The ordinary minister of this sacrament is the bishop alone ; for that reason the two Apostles, Peter and John, because clothed with the episcopal character, were sent to the people of Samaria. The reason is that as the fullness of the Holy Ghost and of Christian sanctification is given in Confirmation, it is the privilege of those alone to confer it who possess the plenitude of the priesthood. Such are the bishops.

¹ Acts viii. 17.

² 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The effects of Confirmation are two. The first is to impress on the soul a special character which, like that of Baptism, can never be effaced, and can, therefore, like Baptism, be received only once. This character is a sign that we are enlisted in the army of Christ; and just as the character of Baptism makes us Christians, so does the character of Confirmation make us soldiers of Christ, and as soldiers of Christ we are bound to defend the faith under all circumstances, even at the cost of our lives.

To accomplish this object, the Holy Ghost is given to us with the abundance of His gifts and graces, and this is the second effect of Confirmation. It is true that in all the sacraments we receive the Holy Ghost; but He does not produce the same effect in all, but varies His operations in a wonderful way according to the nature of each sacrament. In Baptism, He gives us the grace of purity, simplicity, brightness, and innocence, making us, as St. Peter says, like *newly-born children*; and in Confirmation He gives us the grace of strength, which confirms ever more and more within us faith, hope, and charity—the virtues infused in Baptism—and which enables us to confess Jesus Christ by word and deed, and advance in piety, in spite of all the temptations roused up against us by the world, the flesh, and the devil. “In this sacrament,” says St. Thomas, “is given the plenitude of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of grace.”

Should you desire to see visibly the difference between the grace of Baptism and that of Confirmation, consider it in the Apostles: How different they were after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them on the day of Pentecost from what they were before! Before that day they had lain hidden, were timid and cowardly, even so far as to desert Jesus Christ, and deny they had been His disciples; but after the coming of the Holy Ghost, like lions breathing fire, they were courageous in spite of all human power, and became undaunted preachers of the name of Jesus in the very public squares, and that in spite of threats, scourges, and even death itself. Now, as Confirmation is for us Christians nothing else in substance than the Pentecost of the Apostles, that Spirit which they then received enabling them to fulfil the duties of their mission, the very same Spirit do we receive in Confirmation to enable us to discharge the duties of perfect Christians—a spirit of strength, of courage, of generosity, of zeal, of ardour in the constant practice of the Gospel and in defending and supporting it against the evil-living and the scandalous who are found in every place.

But you may say: We, too, have received this sacrament, and

yet it does not seem to us that we have experienced effects such as these. In reply, I have first of all to ask: Have you received Confirmation with the proper spirit and preparation, or have you received it unworthily as only too often happens? In the next place bear in mind that even though it has been properly received its virtue is received only as a principle. Let me explain. A man endowed with marvellous strength is not conscious of that strength except at the moment in which he uses it. The same thing happens in the case in question. On special occasions the value of the sacrament is experienced, just as the first Christians experienced it in times of persecution, and it is experienced infallibly, provided no obstacle is put in the way by sin; for just as sin hinders the grace of the sacrament in its actual reception, so does it hinder the effects of the same grace at the moment in which it should be exercised.

From all this, you will have inferred the necessity of Confirmation—not indeed its absolute necessity, as is the case with Baptism, but its necessity as a matter of precept. Hence they who are able to receive it, and who neglect to do so, are guilty of sin, both because they disobey Jesus Christ who has not instituted this sacrament in vain, and because they wilfully deprive themselves of the graces annexed thereto. What would you think of a traveller who, setting out on a road infested by thieves or wild beasts, should refuse the arms offered him for his defence? Now, such a traveller is the image of a Christian exposed to the dangers of this world. In Confirmation Jesus Christ has prepared a spiritual and powerful weapon for him, and advises him to receive it: *Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day.*¹ If he neglects it, he is culpable, and exposes himself to the evident risk of succumbing to his spiritual enemies.

Hence parents also sin who do not see that their children are confirmed as soon as they arrive at a suitable age. If it concerns them so closely for their children to attain perfect vigour of body, should they not be much more closely concerned for their attaining perfect vigour of soul? By Baptism they remain always children in the spiritual life, but they become strong and perfect Christians only by Confirmation.

It only remains for us now to examine the dispositions requisite to receive this sacrament properly in accordance with the present discipline of the Church. Formerly it was conferred on all infants immediately after Baptism, and in that case grace, like character, always produced its effect; but later on the Church ordained other-

¹ Eph. vi. 13.

wise. Whether it was to remove all danger of receiving it twice—that is, by receiving it at an age when its first reception had been forgotten, or whether it was to enable us to receive it with greater fruit, by receiving it with the use of reason, and at that precise period of life when temptations begin to make themselves felt—at any rate, the Church has ordained that outside danger of death, or some such special exception, it is to be received at an age of sufficient reason.

But if a certain discernment is requisite to receive it properly, may there not, on the other hand, be danger of profaning it by malice sufficient to commit grave sin? If so, conclude that as often as children have lost their baptismal innocence by mortal sin they must recover it by Confession, or, in case of necessity, by perfect contrition, because Confirmation is one of the sacraments of the living which is consequently destined to increase grace, not give it in the first instance; and as in the natural life it is not possible to increase the growth of a dead child, so also the Christian in mortal sin cannot grow in the spiritual life.

There is also required, in those who are to be confirmed, no matter how innocent they may be, a knowledge of the principal mysteries and articles of our faith, because at their age faith is a matter of strict obligation, and without it they would not even be capable of absolution. Moreover, as the grace of the sacrament always corresponds to the greater or less degree of preparation, so should children about to be confirmed be advised to remain for some time previous, like the Apostles, in devout recollection, and to guard against the distraction which might easily arise from the noise and confusion of the crowd that usually assembles on the occasion of the solemn administration of this sacrament.

This, then, is the disposition with which those who are to be confirmed should approach the sacrament; and as a knowledge of the rites and ceremonies used by the bishop in its administration is of great utility in exciting such dispositions, I shall briefly glance at their signification.

The imposition of hands signifies the presence and protection of the Holy Ghost overshadowing the soul. The anointing with sacred chrism also denotes the multiform grace of the sacrament. This chrism is composed of oil and balsam consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday. Now as oil possesses the property of softening and strengthening, so the interior grace of the Holy Ghost strengthens the soul against the enemies of salvation, and softens all that may be hard and difficult to nature in the observance of Christian duties.

In like manner, as balsam possesses the property of hindering corruption and of diffusing an agreeable odour, so does the grace of the sacrament preserve us from the corruption of sin, and make us the good odour of Jesus Christ by a life of true edification to our neighbour.

This anointing is made in the form of a cross on the forehead which is the seat of modesty as well as the most visible part of the body, to denote that the cross is the Christian's standard and that we should never be ashamed of it. Finally, the bishop gives a light stroke on the cheek, showing thereby that we must be ready to undergo every kind of trial and suffering for the faith; it is in doing this that we find true peace of heart, a wish with which the bishop dismisses us when the sacrament has been conferred.

And now, when the sacrament has been received, what remains to be done? Return thanks to God, and take to ourselves the warning of St. Paul: *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed.*¹ On the day of Confirmation the Holy Spirit takes possession of our souls; let us therefore take care not to drive Him forth from our hearts by sinning anew, but rather let us strive to preserve and increase the grace we have received.

All depends on a good beginning. If our childhood and youth are well-regulated and Christian, the power and holy fear of God will accompany us through all our later years, and the first fruits of a life consecrated to God will sanctify its whole course. But if, unfortunately, we go astray from the very beginning, we shall render useless the grace of holiness received in Baptism, and the grace of strength received in Confirmation, and thus the devil, finding no obstacle or resistance, will drive us to the extremes of vice and will interpose no small difficulties in the way of our return to the right path. Let us, then, cultivate the grace so lately received—this, of course, applies to all those who have been recently confirmed.

With regard to the others of us—those, that is, who have been confirmed for a length of time or for many years—we should frequently pray God to deign to awaken in us the grace of Confirmation, especially when we find ourselves exposed to certain trials and dangers.

Let me explain. Thanks to God, we are no longer in the times when it was necessary to confess the faith before persecutors and tyrants, or on the scaffold; yet there are not wanting other sorts of combats for us to sustain, and they are those inflicted on us by

¹ Eph. iv. 30.

unbelieving and evil-living Christians, who spread bad teaching, who promote the cause of bad morals, who ridicule the practice of piety and religion. Our faith and religion are always opposed by such as these, and against such as these we must be ready to profess our faith openly ; nor can we do so without encountering opposition, hatred, and persecution, to conquer which we are unable of ourselves, without the grace which is imparted in this sacrament. Oh, how many are there who, through base human respect, betray the interests of God and of conscience, fall away from doing good, and enter on the path to evil ! But if a miserable human respect is sufficient to make us transgress, what would become of us if, like the first Christians, we were every moment in danger of martyrdom ? Should we not be just so many apostates and deserters ?

But apart altogether from the consideration that we have from time to time to face certain persons, what strength do we not need to preserve the integrity of our faith in the midst of the unbelief that is met with everywhere ; to preserve the purity of our lives in the midst of the laxity, scandal, and excess that surround us, and not be drawn away by the impetuous current of the world's ways ; in fine to preserve the holy fear of God with Christian fervour and recollection, in the midst of such neglect of Christian piety ? In a word everything conspires to lead us astray and destroy us.

See, then, the necessity of recommending ourselves to God, and begging Him that He may cause to flourish in us even more and more that grace of strength and courage He gave us in Confirmation : *Confirm, O God, what Thou hast wrought in us.*¹ Thus shall we be able at the proper time and place to guard the interests of God, and even confound evil-doers and put them to shame ; thus also we shall not fear mockery and derision, nor shall we ever allow ourselves to deviate from our duty on any consideration whatever ; if nothing else we shall leave it to others *to say*, while we ourselves shall *do* all things well and courageously as becomes *the good soldier of Christ.*²

And in this connexion, let us remember the words of Jesus Christ—which exactly apply to the obligations contracted by us in this sacrament—with reference to a full and open profession of our faith : *Everyone therefore that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven ; but he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*³

A day, then, shall come in which we shall either be recognized

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 29.

² 2 Tim. ii. 3.

³ Matt. x. 32, 33.

by Jesus Christ as His own, or rejected by Him—eternally sealed either as His friends or as His enemies. That day shall surely come, and it shall come soon. Let us, then, never lose sight of it, and the thought of it will encourage us to declare ourselves for Him now and never allow ourselves to be influenced by human considerations in anything that concerns the honour of God, the cause of religion, our duty as Christians derived from Baptism, and as soldiers of Christ from Confirmation. This is the fruit I desire to draw from this instruction.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

OF all the mysteries which our Lord and Saviour has bequeathed to us as the sure channels of divine grace there is none that can for a moment be compared with the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist ; and so also no severer punishment is to be feared from God for any crime whatever, than for the unholy and irreligious use of that which is full of all holiness, or rather which contains the very Author and Source of all holiness. This the Apostle wisely understood—on this he has unmistakably given us warning. For, having declared how enormous was the guilt of those *who discerned not the body of the Lord*, he immediately went on to add : *Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep.*¹ In order, then, that the faithful may understand that divine honours are due to this heavenly sacrament, and that they may derive thence abundant fruits of grace, and escape the most just anger of God, the pastor will set forth with the greatest possible care all that may seem calculated to throw greater light on the majesty of this sacrament.

1.—The reverence
due to this
sacrament.

I.—INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST

2.—Its institution. For this purpose, and following the example of St. Paul who professed that he delivered to the Corinthians that which he himself had received from the Lord, the pastor must, first of all, explain to the faithful how this sacrament was instituted. Now, here is what the Evangelist, in the most unmistakable language, tells us of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament :—

Our Lord *having loved His own who were in the world, He*

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 30.

*loved them to the end,*¹ and, knowing that His hour was come when He was to pass out of this world to the Father, in order to leave them a divine and admirable pledge of that love, and to be ever present with his own, He in His unutterable wisdom brought that to pass which transcends all the order and condition of nature. For when He had celebrated the supper of the Paschal Lamb with His disciples, He, in order that the figure might give way to the reality—the shadow to the substance—took bread, and giving thanks to God, blessed and brake and gave to His disciples, and said: *Take ye and eat, this is My Body which shall be delivered for you; this do for a commemoration of Me. In like manner He took the chalice also, after He had supped, saying: This Chalice is the New Testament in My Blood; this do, as often as you shall drink it, in commemoration of Me.*²

3.—Various names given to this sacrament. Convinced of the impossibility of being able to convey by any one word an accurate idea of the dignity and excellence of this sacrament, sacred writers have tried to express it by a variety of terms.

The Eucharist. Thus they sometimes call it the Eurharist, a word which we, with good reason, may take to mean either “Excellent Grace,” or “Thanksgiving.” It is an excellent grace, either because it is a foretaste of eternal life, concerning which it is written: *The grace of God is life everlasting,*³ or because it contains Jesus Christ, who is grace itself and the source of all grace.

It is also correctly rendered Thanksgiving, since in immolating this all pure Victim we daily return boundless thanks to God for all the blessings with which He has loaded us, and especially for the perfect gift of grace which He bestows on us in this sacrament.

Moreover, the word is fully in keeping with the circumstances that accompanied the institution of this mystery. For, *taking bread, He brake it and gave thanks.* And the Psalmist, contemplating the greatness of this mystery, cried out: *He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and a gracious Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him.*⁴ But immediately before these words the Psalmist made an act of thanksgiving, when he says: *His work is praise and magnificence.*

¹ John xiii. 1. ² Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24.
³ Rom. vi. 23. ⁴ Ps. cx. 4.

4.—Other names. It is often given the name of Sacrifice also, concerning which there will, later on, be occasion to speak at greater length.

Communion. It is also called Communion—a word clearly taken from the passage of the Apostle: *The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?*¹ For, as St. John Damascene explains, this sacrament unites us to Christ, makes us partakers of His flesh and divinity, and reconciles and unites us to each other in Him, making us to be one single body.

The sacrament of Peace and Charity. It is for this reason that it is called the sacrament of Peace and Charity—names that show us clearly how unworthy of the name of Christian are those who entertain enmities towards others and with what zeal we should banish far from us those baneful pests, hatred, dissension, and discord; all the more so inasmuch as by this daily Sacrifice of our religion we profess that we desire before all things to preserve peace and charity.

5.—Called also the Viaticum. Sacred writers also give it the name of Viaticum, both because it is the spiritual food which sustains us in the pilgrimage of this life, and because it keeps us on the road that leads to eternal bliss and glory. It is for this reason that the practice has been always observed in the Catholic Church to allow no one to die without having been fortified by this sacrament.

And the Supper. In fine, some of the most ancient of the Fathers who, following the authority of the Apostle, have sometimes given to the Eucharist the name Supper, because instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ at the saving mystery of the Last Supper.

6.—To be consecrated and received fasting. Though this is true, it would not be right to conclude that it is lawful to consecrate or receive the Eucharist after food or drink. This salutary usage of administering it only to persons fasting, which according to the ancient writers was introduced by the Apostles themselves, has always been retained and observed.

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST

I. THE NATURE OF THIS SACRAMENT—THE REAL PRESENCE

Q. What is the sacrament of the Eucharist ?

A. The Eucharist is a sacrament in which by the marvellous conversion of the whole substance of bread into the Body of Jesus Christ, and of that of wine into His precious Blood, is contained truly, really, and substantially, the Body, the Blood, the Soul and Divinity of the same Lord Jesus Christ, under appearance of bread and wine to be our spiritual food.

Q. In the Eucharist is there the same Jesus Christ who is in heaven, and who was born on earth of the Blessed Virgin ?

A. Yes, in the Eucharist there is truly the same Jesus Christ who is in heaven, and who was born on earth of the Blessed Virgin.

Q. Why do you believe that in the Eucharist Jesus Christ is really present ?

A. I believe that in the Eucharist Jesus Christ is truly present, because He Himself has said it, and holy Church teaches it.

Q. What is the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist ?

A. The matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist is that which was used by Jesus Christ Himself, that is, wheat-n bread and wine of the vine.

Q. What is the form of the sacrament of the Eucharist ?

A. The form of the sacrament of the Eucharist consists of the words used by Jesus Christ Himself : *This is My Body : This is My Blood.*

Q. What is the host before consecration ?

A. The host before consecration is bread.

Q. After consecration what is the host ?

A. After consecration the host is the true Body of our Lord Jesus Christ under the species of bread.

Q. What is in the chalice before consecration ?

A. In the chalice before consecration there is wine with a few drops of water.

Q. After consecration what is in the chalice ?

A. After consecration there is in the chalice the true Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the species of wine.

Q. When does the change of the bread into the Body and of the wine into the Blood of Jesus Christ take place ?

A. The change of the bread into the Body and of the wine into the Blood of Jesus Christ is made in the very moment in which the priest pronounces the words of consecration during holy Mass.

Q. What is the consecration ?

A. The consecration is the renewal, by means of the priest, of the miracle wrought by Jesus Christ at Last Supper, of changing bread and wine into His adorable Body and Blood by saying : *This is My Body : This is My Blood.*

Q. What does the Church call the miraculous change of bread and of wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ ?

A. The Church calls the miraculous change which is daily wrought upon our altars *transubstantiation*.

Q. Who gave this great power to the words of consecration ?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is Almighty God, gave this great power to the words of consecration.

Q. Is there nothing left of the bread and of the wine after consecration ?

A. After consecration the species of the bread and of the wine alone are left.

Q. What are the species of the bread and of the wine ?

A. The species of the bread and of the wine are the quantity and sensible qualities of the bread and of the wine, such as the form, the colour, and the taste.

Q. How can the species of the bread and of the wine remain without their substance ?

A. The species of the bread and of the wine remain without their substance in a wonderful way by the power of God Almighty.

Q. Under the species of the bread is there only the Body of Jesus Christ and under the species of the wine only His Blood ?

A. Both under the species of the bread and under the species of the wine the living Jesus Christ is all present, with His Body, His Blood, His Soul and His Divinity.

Q. Can you tell me why Jesus Christ is whole and entire both in the host and in the chalice ?

A. Both in the host and in the chalice Jesus Christ is whole and entire, because He is living and immortal in the Eucharist as He is in heaven ; hence where His Body is, there also are His Blood, His Soul, and His Divinity ; and where His Blood is, there also are His Body, His Soul and His Divinity, all these being inseparable in Jesus Christ.

Q. When Jesus Christ is in the

host does He cease to be in heaven ?

A. When Jesus Christ is in the host He does not cease to be in heaven, but is at one and the same time in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament.

Q. Is Jesus Christ present in all the consecrated hosts in the world ?

A. Yes, Jesus Christ is present in all consecrated hosts in the world.

Q. How can Jesus Christ be present in all the consecrated hosts in the world ?

A. Jesus Christ is present in all the consecrated hosts in the world by the Omnipotence of God, to whom nothing is impossible.

Q. When the host is broken is the Body of Jesus Christ broken also ?

A. When the host is broken, the Body of Jesus Christ is not broken, but only the species of the bread are broken.

Q. In which part of the host is the Body of Jesus Christ ?

A. The Body of Jesus Christ is entire in all the parts into which the host is broken.

Q. Is Jesus Christ just as much in a particle of a host as in a large host ?

A. Just as much in a particle of a host as in a large host there is the same Jesus Christ.

Q. Why is the Most Blessed Eucharist preserved in our churches ?

A. The Most Blessed Eucharist is preserved in our churches that It may be adored by the faithful, and brought to the sick when necessary.

Q. Ought the Eucharist to be adored ?

A. The Eucharist ought to be adored by all, because it contains really, truly, and substantially, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Eighth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST: ITS INSTITUTION AND NATURE

It is now our duty to consider the sacrament of the Eucharist—a sacrament ordained to strengthen within us the spiritual life that has been restored through Confession—a sacrament the holiest, the most august, and called *par excellence* The Sacrament—a sacrament which contains the most hidden mysteries of the wisdom of God, the most beautiful traits of His Omnipotence, the most lovable efforts of His goodness—a sacrament, in fine, in which, to use the words of the Prophet, Jesus Christ has epitomized and compendiated all His wonders : *He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and a gracious Lord ; He hath given food to them that fear Him.*¹ In order to have a proper idea of this great sacrament, we shall consider the following points :—

1. Its institution, and the different parts that constitute it.
2. The principal truths of faith to be held in reference to it.
3. The various ends for which it was instituted ; especially that of being our food in sacramental Communion.
4. The dispositions necessary to receive it worthily and advantageously.
5. The wonderful effects it produces in our souls, and hence,
6. The frequent use we should make of it.

What, then, is the sacrament of the Eucharist ? It is that sacrament which really and truly contains the body and blood, soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine.

This sacrament, as you well know, was instituted by Jesus Christ at the last supper which He made with His disciples on the eve of His passion. The holy Evangelists tell us that having eaten the paschal lamb, which was a figure of this sacrament, He rose from the table and washed the feet of His disciples ; then, sitting

¹ Ps. cx. 4.

down to table once more, He took bread, and raising His eyes to heaven, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying *Take ye and eat : THIS IS MY BODY*. In like manner He took a chalice or cup of wine, blessed it and gave it to them, saying : *All of you take and drink of this : THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD*.¹

Then it was that He consecrated the Eucharist for the first time. The words pronounced by Jesus Christ accomplished invisibly the great miracle of changing bread and wine into His very body and blood. And as this miracle was to be perpetuated in the Church, Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles and, in their person, to the bishops and priests, their successors, the power of doing, down to the end of time, the self-same thing which He himself had done, for He said to them : *Do this for a commemoration of Me*—as much as to say : I give you the power to do for ever that which you have seen Me do ; bless bread and wine in My name ; say the self-same words that I have said ; and these words which you will pronounce in My name shall have the same power on your lips as they have had on Mine : *Do this for a commemoration of Me*.

Thus Jesus Christ commanded the Apostles ordaining them in that very moment priests of the New Testament, and prescribing for them the matter and form they were to use. Hence, in the self-same manner in which the Eucharist was instituted, in that very same way is it now accomplished in the time of holy Mass, the priest takes the same matter as was used by Christ—that is bread and wine—he pronounces the same words as were used by Christ, which constitute the form of the sacrament : *THIS IS MY BODY : THIS IS MY BLOOD* ; and in virtue of these words the adorable mystery is daily renewed and perpetuated on our altars.

It is a mystery that is named by Sacred Scripture and by the Fathers, the *Mystery of Faith*. And with good reason ; for there is no other mystery which so tests our faith, owing to the many and varied wonders it contains in itself. Recognize this in the brief exposition I am now about to make of all those truths which in this sacrament the holy Catholic Church proposes for our belief—for our belief, I repeat, and not for our discussion or examination.

1. The first truth is the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist—that is, in virtue of the words of consecration pronounced by the priest over the bread and wine, there is made to be present, not merely metaphorically or figuratively as the Calvinists pretend, but truly, really, corporeally, and substantially, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, true God and true Man—the very Jesus who was born of

¹ Matt. xxvi. 26.

the virginal womb of Mary, who died on the cross and arose again, and who now sits gloriously at the right hand of His divine Father. Of this we are assured both by the words in which Jesus Christ expressed Himself when He promised to institute this sacrament, and by the words used by Him when actually instituting it.

(a) By the words He used *when He promised to institute this sacrament*. Immediately after the wondrous multiplication of loaves wrought by Him in the desert, He took advantage of that miracle to excite the multitude who were astonished at such a prodigy, to the consideration of a still greater prodigy—of another bread that was not earthly, but spiritual and divine, which He intended to give them, and this bread was He Himself. *I, he said, am the living bread come down from heaven ; I will give it to you, and this bread will be My very flesh which I am to offer for the salvation of the world : The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world . . . My flesh is truly meat and My blood is truly drink ; He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*¹ So literally were His words taken that they said to one another in wonder and surprise : Is He dreaming, or is He mad ? How can it be possible for Him to give us His flesh to eat ? *How can this man give us His flesh to eat ?* Yet Jesus Christ so far from replying that His words were to be understood in a figurative and not a literal sense—an explanation that would have removed every difficulty—insisted anew and with still greater force on what He had already said, for He added : *I solemnly say unto you : Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you ; for My flesh is truly meat and My blood is truly drink ;*² and He repeated and reconfirmed the self-same assertion : *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him.*³

(b) *The words used by Jesus Christ in the actual institution of the sacrament* are as clear and precise as anything ever was. He did not say : Take ye and eat : this is a figure of My body ; but He did say : *This is My Body*. And for still greater clearness, He added that the body He was giving was the self-same body that was ere long to be sacrificed, and the self-same blood that was ere long to be shed for the remission of sins : *My body which shall be given for you—My blood which shall be shed for you*. Now, as the body and blood offered up by Jesus on the Cross were real beyond any shadow of doubt, so also are the body and blood given to us in the Eucharist true and real. The real presence, then, of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament could not be more clearly expressed ; nor could He use

¹ John vi. 52-57.² John vi. 54.³ John vi. 57.

more significant language to declare whether it was really His intention to institute it.

From this first truth we should infer the dignity and pre-eminence of this sacrament above all the others—a dignity and pre-eminence beyond compare. For, the other sacraments contain the grace of Jesus Christ, variously diversified according to the various ends of each sacrament ; but in this sacrament is contained the very Author of grace Himself. The other sacraments are channels of grace ; but this is the fountain and source of grace.

2. You must not, however, be led to believe, according to the error of the Lutherans which has been condemned by the Church, that after consecration the bread and wine are still present conjointly with the body and blood of Jesus Christ. No ; and this is the second truth proposed by faith for our belief in connexion with this mystery—and it is, that by consecration the entire substance of bread and wine ceases to be, and is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

What, then, remains of the bread and wine ? Nothing but the accidents—the sensible qualities—alone ; that is to say, the form, the odour, the colour, the taste. If we consult our senses—our sight, taste, touch, smell—it seems to be still bread and wine ; but faith teaches us that what to our eyes seems to be still bread and wine is no longer bread and wine, but is the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. Now this is that wonderful change which is quite properly called Transubstantiation—that is, the change of one substance into another—a change solidly founded on the words of Jesus already mentioned in which He did not say : In this bread or along with this bread, there is My body ; but simply : *This is My body*.

It will be necessary to dwell on this most difficult point at greater length and with the utmost attention ; and in order to have some idea of the change that takes place, we must keep before our minds a very clear and distinct notion of certain words used in connexion with this change. These words are *substance* and *accidents* which, according to the opinion implied in the Church's teaching on Transubstantiation, form the constituent parts of every object we see around us.

Take any object you wish—water, for instance—and consider it attentively for a moment, and ask yourselves in what does that water really consist. You will observe that it does not consist in quantity, for a single drop of water is just as truly and really water as the whole boundless ocean ; nor in colour, for water still remains water be it ever so much coloured ; nor is it in taste and smell, for

water may be changed in these respects, while remaining water still ; nor is it in form or shape, for water is water no matter the shape of the vessel in which it is contained. Hence it is clear that water remains water, no matter how much you vary its size, shape, colour, taste, smell, and general appearance ; and from this it is also clear that water consists in none of these things, but that besides them all there is something abiding and permanent—something that does not depend on size, shape, colour, taste, or smell—something which we cannot see, but which we know is so real and so essential that water cannot exist without it. Now, that permanent something which makes water to be what it is, is what we call the substance of water ; while the varying qualities of size, shape, colour, taste, and smell, which come and go, increase and diminish, without affecting the substance, are what we call accidents, because it is their nature to vary indefinitely. We also call them species or appearances because it is by means of them that the substance which we cannot see nor feel becomes manifested, and, so to say, appears to us.

It is the same with any other object—take bread and regard it in the same way, and you will find that bread is bread no matter how much you may change its size, shape, colour, taste, and smell—that the smallest crumb is just as truly and really bread, as the largest imaginable loaf ; in other words, you will see that there is a wide difference between the abiding, essential, substance of bread and the changing, varying nature of the accidents or appearances under which it becomes manifest to us.

The self-same remarks apply to wine, as you will readily see if you consider the matter for a moment.

So much for substance and accidents. Let us now turn our attention to the various kinds of changes that objects undergo. First of all there is that class of change that affects the accidents or appearances alone, and this is the commonest class of change—a change in size, or shape, or colour, or taste, or smell, or in several of these together, leaving the substance of the thing itself unchanged.

The next class of change is that affecting the substance as well as the accidents ; such, for instance, as the change that takes place of the food we eat into our blood, and flesh, and bone. Here, as you will observe, not only are the appearances or accidents completely changed, but the very substance of the food we have eaten ceases to be what it was, and is changed into blood, and flesh, and bone. Such changes occur gradually and naturally, though occasionally they occur suddenly and miraculously, as happened when our Lord changed water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. In that case both

substance and accidents ceased to be the substance and accidents of water, and by the power of God became the substance and accidents of wine.

Thus far we have seen there are two classes of natural changes—one, in which the accidents alone are changed, while the substance remains unchanged; the second, in which both accidents and substance are changed; now there is only one other conceivable class of change, and that is that the substance should be changed while the accidents remain exactly as they were before. In the ordinary course of nature this never happens—never can happen; but in the course of God's boundless providence, it does happen, and it happens precisely when by the power of God the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. The accidents or appearances remain unchanged and just as they were before, but the substance has ceased to be, and in its place is the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

And how do we know this is the case? Simply because He Himself assures us of it. *This*, He said, holding in His holy hands what had been and what still seemed to be bread, *This is My body*—no longer bread, even though it seems to be, but the true substance of the body of the Lord.

He has said it, and who shall call it into doubt? Who shall dare say that is impossible which God had assured us really takes place? If God was able to change Lot's wife into a pillar of salt; the rod of Aaron into a serpent; the waters of Egypt into blood; and water into wine at the feast of Cana in Galilee; why could He not effect a change that is similar in certain respects? "Of old, in Cana of Galilee," says St. Justin, "He changed water into wine, which is akin to blood; shall we consider Him unworthy of faith now that He has changed wine into blood?" Nay, remarks St. Ambrose, if we believe that God was able to create all things out of nothing, should we not more easily believe that He is able to change one substance into another? If bread and wine by a natural, if incomprehensible, power are daily changed into the body and blood of the person who eats or drinks them, why should we not believe that they may be converted by Almighty power into the body and blood of Jesus Christ?

This second truth of faith leads us to note another twofold difference between this and the other sacraments.

(a) The first is that in the other sacraments the matter of the sacrament is not changed, but remains the same; for instance, the water in Baptism, the oil in Extreme Unction; but in the Eucharist

the substance of the matter is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, while of the bread and wine there remains nothing but the sensible qualities alone.

(b) The second is that the other sacraments have their being in a transient action, and, properly speaking, do not exist outside the act in which they are administered and received; while the Eucharist is a permanent sacrament. For the substance of the bread and wine being converted into the substance of the body and blood of our Lord at the moment when the priest pronounces the words of consecration, once this change has taken place Jesus Christ remains under the appearances of bread and wine as long as the appearances themselves last, His presence being conjoined to them in such a way that it never ceases to continue under them as long as they are not destroyed or altered to such an extent that the bread could no longer be called bread, or the wine no longer wine.

From the permanent presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist under the sacramental appearances is derived the obligation of adoring the Blessed Sacrament with real worship, both internal and external. And truly, if we adore Jesus Christ in the manger, or on the Cross, much more should we adore Him in the Eucharist, where He really dwells, with all the plenitude of His Divinity, it being of course clearly understood that our adoration is not given to the sacramental appearances, but to Jesus Christ hidden under them.

3. The third truth is that Jesus Christ is whole and entire in the host just as in the chalice, as much under the appearance of bread as under the appearance of wine, although for different reasons. Let me explain. Precisely in virtue of the words of consecration which accomplish exactly what they signify, the bread is converted into the body alone, and the wine into the blood alone. But as Jesus Christ is living, glorious, and immortal in the Eucharist, and as His glorified body is a living, indivisible body, so by natural concomitance His blood and His soul must be present along with His body in the host, and along with His blood in the chalice are present His body and His soul; and finally, by reason of the Hypostatic Union with the Humanity, there is also present His Divinity—in a word, Jesus Christ whole and entire, both as God and as man.

Nay, not only is Jesus Christ whole and entire under the appearances of either bread or wine, but He is also present whole and entire under the smallest particle of each species; just like our soul, which is entire and indivisible in the whole body and in each part of the body; or just as one man speaking may be heard by thousands and thousands of people;

or just like a mirror which, when broken, will reflect back an image from each one of its parts. This is clearly gathered from the Gospel ; for Jesus Christ did not consecrate one by one the several portions with which He gave Communion to His Apostles, but He consecrated at one time as much as sufficed to communicate them all ; and nevertheless He said to each of them that they received His divine Person.

Hence it follows that on the host being divided, the species alone are divided, and not the body of Jesus Christ which always remains entire, and which those who receive it receive whole and entire, even though they only receive the smallest fragment of the consecrated host.

Oh, what an abyss of wonders is not contained in this divine sacrament ! and with what reason is it not called by the Church *the mystery of faith* ! And indeed in the other mysteries we believe that which we do not see ; but here not only we must believe what we do not see, but even the very contrary to what we seem to see—we must believe that on the words of consecration being pronounced :—

(1.) The whole substance of bread and wine ceases to be, without its accidents being destroyed in any way ;

(2.) That these accidents remain without the support of their own substance, and produce all the effects of that substance which is no longer present—we see bread, but it is not bread ; we taste bread, but it is not bread ; the different processes by which bread is preserved, changed, corrupted, are evident, but bread it is not ;

(3.) That the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, takes the place of the substance of the bread and wine ;

(4.) That the true body of Jesus Christ, without being in the least diminished or lessened, is contained within the narrow boundary of a particle ; nay even that like the pure spirits He is there in His true substance in such a way as to be whole and entire in the very smallest part of the consecrated bread and wine ;

(5.) That, finally, the self-same body of Jesus Christ, without being multiplied, is at one and the same time in heaven and in the host—nay, in every place in which consecrated particles are preserved.

Such, then, is a group of miracles that, just as they are certain to our faith, so are they far above our limited intelligence and capacity. Even so, what then ? Shall we dare to doubt or discredit that which is proposed for our belief by God Himself ? What is our idea of God, of His wisdom, of His truth, of His omnipotence, of all that He is ?

If the difficulties encountered by our feeble reason in this mystery were sufficient to refuse it our belief, it should also be refused to several other articles that are equally incomprehensible, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection of the body—nay, several natural truths that are most certain though inexplicable. Either, then, on the one hand, do not believe anything that surpasses our understanding, which amounts to rejecting the evidence of many things which cannot be denied though they cannot be explained—which amounts, too, to setting limits to the divine power which can do all things, and which would do so little if it were only able to accomplish those things that are on a level with our understanding; or, on the other hand, in all things submit equally to the authority of God.

And thus it is. The moment that God reveals a truth, be it understood or not understood, there is no alternative but to believe. And this is the only reasonable course; for if the truths proposed for our belief are obscure and unintelligible in themselves, they are clear and luminous in the external support derived from divine revelation, and from the infallible word of God, to resist which is downright rashness and a still greater abuse of our reason. That which comes from God, the First and Essential Truth, cannot but be true; while on the other hand divine Omnipotence is capable of accomplishing infinitely more than we are capable of imagining; hence, St. Augustine wisely remarked: "Let us acknowledge that God can do what we confess we cannot fathom."

Let us, then, stir up our faith, and protest in the sight of God that no matter how much our senses and our understanding may object, we firmly believe with our whole soul and our whole heart in the august and ineffable mystery of the Eucharist, as it has ever been believed in by the Church from the very beginning down to our own days. The Jews went away murmuring amongst themselves with an air of incredulity when they heard these truths proposed; but Jesus did not deign to satisfy their curiosity, and His only reply was that they should believe, thus teaching them that in the mysteries of God we must seek neither the how nor the why, but trust blindly in His divine word—in acting thus consists all the merit of our faith: *Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.*¹

As good Catholics, all here unhesitatingly believe in this mystery; but it should also be our aim to back up our faith by a life in keeping therewith, so as not to afford heretics any new ground for remaining obstinate in their incredulity.

¹ John xx. 29.

All the difficulties made by them can be and are triumphantly answered. There is, however, one extrinsic difficulty to which I do not well know how to reply—one which must certainly cover us with shame. They assert that this mystery is not believed in, even by us Catholics; and on what do they base their charge? On the irreverence, the profanation, and the scandals they witness in our churches. How is it possible, they say, in face of the undevotional and far from respectful attitude frequently adopted by Catholics in the churches, to say that they believe that Jesus Christ is really present, true God and true Man, under the sacramental species? How otherwise could an idolater, a heretic, behave?

See how open contradiction between belief and practice redounds to the contempt of our religion, to the dishonour of our faith, and serves as a pretext, even though a trivial and inexcusable pretext, to sectaries to continue obstinate in their unbelief! We attract heretics with one hand—that is, with the strength of our reasons, based on the authority of God; but we repel them with the other hand—that is with the force of our bad example. Let us, then, endeavour to make our belief in this mystery shine visibly before men, and even thus, wisely confute unbelief, by comporting ourselves in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist with that decency, modesty, and devotion that will manifest our faith to all.

And all the more should we do this in so much as the hidden presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is the greatest excess of the love of a God made man for us—the *greatest of the miracles of Christ*, as St. Thomas calls it, and as we shall see for ourselves in our next instruction, when we come to explain the loving ends for which Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament.

CHAPTER VI

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST—(*continued*)

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

II.—THE EUCHARIST A TRUE SACRAMENT—ITS MATTER

7.—The Eucharist truly a sacrament.

HAVING explained the meaning of the word, it will be necessary now to show that the Eucharist is a true sacrament, and is one of the seven always recognized and venerated by the Church, as is clear from the fact that at the consecration of the chalice it is called “a mystery of faith.” In addition to this, and omitting an almost innumerable host of testimonies from sacred writers who have always enumerated the Eucharist amongst the true sacraments, this teaching is justified by the very meaning and nature of a sacrament. It has outward and sensible signs; it signifies and produces grace; while as for its institution by Christ, neither the Evangelists nor the Apostle have left any room for doubt. Now, since all these notes combine to establish the truth of the Sacrament, there is clearly no need for further arguments.

8.—In what precisely the sacrament of the Eucharist consists.

The pastor will particularly observe that in this mystery there are various things to which sacred writers have occasionally given the name of sacrament. Sometimes its consecration was called a sacrament; sometimes its reception; frequently the body and blood of the Lord, which are contained in the Eucharist. For, as St. Augustine observes, this sacrament consists of two things—the visible species of the elements, and the invisible body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this sense that we say that this sacrament, that is the body and blood of the Lord, is to be adored. But it is clear that all these are called sacraments in a less strict sense—the species of bread and wine alone possess the true and proper import of the name.

- 9.—Difference between the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

It will be easy to see how the Eucharist differs from all the other sacraments. The other sacraments have their being only during the actual application of their matter—that is to say, only at the moment in which they are being administered to some one. Baptism, for instance, is a sacrament only while water is being actually employed to baptize a person ; but the Eucharist is constituted a perfect sacrament by the sole consecration of the matter, and it ceases not to be a true sacrament even though enclosed and preserved in the ciborium.

Moreover, in the other sacraments there is no change of the material elements into another substance. The water of Baptism, for instance, or the oil of Chrism, do not lose their former nature of water and oil by being administered as sacraments ; but in the Eucharist, that which previous to consecration was bread and wine, is, after consecration, truly the substance of the body and blood of the Lord.

- 10.—The Eucharist is one single sacrament.

Although there are two elements—bread and wine—that go to constitute the sacramental matter of the Eucharist, yet, guided by the teaching of the Church we profess that the Eucharist is only one sacrament, and not several ; otherwise we could no longer hold, with tradition and with the teaching of the Councils of the Lateran, of Florence, and of Trent, that there are seven sacraments, neither more nor less. Moreover, the object of the grace of this sacrament is to render us one mystic body ; and to be in keeping with its effect, the Eucharist should constitute but one sacrament—one, not because it may not be composed of more elements than one, but because it signifies only one thing. Just as food and drink, which are two different things, are employed only for one object—the sustenance of the body ; so also was it fitting that the two different species of the sacrament which were to signify the spiritual food by which the soul is nourished and sustained should be analogous to the two substances mentioned just now. Hence, the words of our Lord : *My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*¹

- 11.—The Eucharist signifies three things principally.

The pastor will also carefully explain what the sacrament of the Eucharist signifies, in order that on beholding the sacred mysteries with the eyes of their body, his flock may at the same time feed their souls by the contemplation of divine things.

¹ John vi. 56.

Now, in this sacrament three things are signified :—

1. The first is the PASSION of Christ our Lord—a thing past. He Himself it is who taught us : *Do this for a commemoration of Me*¹ and St. Paul bears witness : *As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come.*²

2. The second is divine and heavenly GRACE—a thing present—which is bestowed on us in this sacrament to nourish and sustain the soul. Just as in Baptism we are begotten to newness of life, and in Confirmation are strengthened to resist Satan and openly profess the name of Christ ; so in the sacrament of the Eucharist are we nourished and sustained.

3. The third, which regards the future, is the reward of ETERNAL JOY AND GLORY, which, according to God's promise, we are to receive in our heavenly country.

These three things which clearly regard the past, present, and future, are so well signified by the holy mystery of the Eucharist, that the sacrament, although consisting of different species, represents each one of the three as significantly as if the three were but one.

It is of the highest importance for the pastor to thoroughly understand the matter of the Eucharist, in order to be able both to consecrate it duly himself, and instruct his flock as to its signification, and to enkindle in their hearts an ardent desire of possessing the treasure it denotes.

12.—The matter of the Eucharist is two-fold—bread and wine.
(a) Wheaten-bread. The matter of the Eucharist is two-fold—the one on which we shall now speak being wheaten-bread ; the other shall be explained later on. Christ our Lord, as the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke testify, *took bread* into His hands, *blessed* it and *brake* it, saying : *THIS IS MY BODY* ;³ and according to St. John, our Saviour called Himself bread : *I, said He, am the living bread come down from Heaven.*⁴

There are, however, different sorts of bread, because the material of which it is composed may be different ; thus it may be made of wheat, or of barley, or of pulse, or other products of the earth ; or because they possess different qualities, one being leavened, the other unleavened. As regards the former, the words of our Saviour make it clear that the matter of the

¹ Luke xxii. 19.
Luke xxii. 19.

² 1 Cor. xi. 26.
⁴ John vi. 41.

³ Matt. xxvi. 26 ; Mark xiv. 22 ;

Eucharist must be wheaten bread. In our ordinary conversation when we say bread we mean wheaten bread. This is also confirmed by a figure in the Old Testament. Our Lord commanded that the *loaves of proposition*, which prefigured this sacrament, should be made of *fine flour*.¹

13.—As well as being wheaten, the bread should be unleavened.

But if none but wheaten bread can be regarded as the proper matter for this sacrament (conformable to the Apostolic tradition and to the defined teaching of the Church), it will readily be seen from the circumstances attending its institution by our Lord that the bread should also be unleavened. He consecrated and instituted the Eucharist on the first day of unleavened bread—a day during which it was not lawful for the Jews to have any leavened bread in their houses. Should the words of St. John the Evangelist, who relates that all this took place before the Pasch, be objected, it will be easy to answer the objection. The feast of unleavened bread commenced on the evening of the fifth day (Thursday), and on that evening our Lord celebrated the Passover. Now, what the other Evangelists call the *first day of the unleavened bread*, is referred to by St. John as *the day before the Pasch*, because it was his object to note the *natural* day which did not commence till sunrise. Hence it is that St. John Chrysostom understands the *first day of the unleavened bread* to be that day on the evening of which the unleavened bread was to be eaten.

Moreover, the consecration of unleavened bread is in perfect keeping with that purity and innocence of heart with which the faithful should approach the reception of this sacrament, as may be gathered from the Apostle's words: *Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new mass, as you are unleavened; for Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*²

14.—Unleavened bread not absolutely necessary.

This quality, however, is not to be considered so essential as to render the sacrament impossible by its absence—each kind possesses equally the real name and real nature of bread. Nevertheless it is lawful for no one on his own individual authority, or rather presumption, to alter the laudable rite of the Church of which he is a member. It is all the more

¹ Lev. xxiv. 5.

² 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

unlawful in priests of the Latin Church, who have been commanded expressly by the Supreme Pontiffs to celebrate the sacred mysteries with unleavened bread alone.

Enough has now been said with regard to the first matter of the Eucharist. It only remains to be observed that the particular quantity of bread that is to be used in consecration has never been determined, for this reason, that it depends upon the number of those who may or ought to receive the sacred mysteries—a number that cannot be definitely defined.

15.—(b) The second matter of the Eucharist is wine of the grape. We now come to the second matter of the Eucharist, and it is wine pressed from the grape and mixed with a little water. The Catholic Church has always taught that our Saviour made use of wine in the institution of this sacrament, and He Himself said: *I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day.*¹ Regarding these words, St. John Chrysostom observes: "He says *of the fruit of the vine*, which certainly produced wine not water;" as if he intended to crush, even so far in advance, the heresy of those who asserted that water alone should be used in these mysteries.

16.—Mixed with water. It has always, however, been the usage in the Church to mingle water with the wine. First, because the authority of the Councils and the testimony of St. Cyprian show us that our Lord Himself did so; and secondly, because by this admixture is renewed the memory of the blood and water which issued from His side. Moreover, the word water, as we see in the Apocalypse,² signifies the people; and hence water mixed with wine signifies the union of the faithful with Christ their Head. For the rest, this rite is based on Apostolic tradition and has always been observed by the Catholic Church.

17.—But only a little water. But although there are grave reasons for mixing water with the wine, so grave indeed that it cannot be omitted without mortal sin; yet even if it actually is omitted, the sacrament would none the less exist. But care must be taken to observe that though water must be mixed with the wine in the sacred mysteries, only a small quantity is to be used, since in the opinion of sacred writers

¹ Matt. xxvi. 29.

² xvii. 15.

that water is changed into wine. Hence it is that Pope Honorius wrote : " A pernicious abuse has been introduced amongst you—that of using more water than wine in the holy Sacrifice ; whereas in accordance with the very reasonable practice of the universal Church, far more wine than water should be used."

These, then, are the two and only two elements of this sacrament ; and rightly has it been forbidden by many decrees of the Church to offer anything else but bread and wine as some dared to do.

18.—Peculiar fitness of these two elements.

Let us now see how well adapted are these two symbols of bread and wine to represent the nature and effects of which we believe and profess they are the sensible signs :—

(a) And first, they signify Jesus Christ, as our true life ; for He Himself has said : *My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*¹ As, then, the body of Christ our Lord bestows the food of eternal life on those who receive it with purity and holiness, rightly is this sacrament composed precisely of those elements which serve to sustain our present life ; thus giving the faithful to understand that the soul and the heart are nourished by the Communion of the precious body and blood of Christ.

(b) Secondly, these two elements also serve to some extent to prove the truth of the real presence of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Seeing, as we do, that bread and wine are every day changed by the power of nature into human flesh and blood, we are all the more easily led by this analogy to believe that the substance of bread and wine is changed by the words of consecration into the true body and blood of our Lord.

(c) This miraculous change of the elements also serves to shadow forth what takes place in the soul. Just as the substance of bread and wine is really changed into the body and blood of Christ without presenting any visible indication of that change, so when we receive the true life in the sacrament of the Eucharist we are interiorly renewed to life, even though nothing seems outwardly changed in us.

(d) Finally, the Church being one body yet composed of many members, nothing could more perfectly represent their union than the elements of bread and wine. Bread is made

¹ John vi. 56.

from many grains, and wine is pressed from many grapes ; and thus do they declare that we, too, many as we are, are closely united by the bond of this divine mystery and made as it were one body.

III.—THE FORM OF THE EUCHARIST

19.—The form to be used in the consecration of the bread. We now come to explain the form to be used in the consecration of the bread, not indeed that this point need be explained to the people except in some special cases (for this knowledge is not necessary to those not in Holy Orders), but to guard against the possibility of priests making grievous mistakes in the consecration of this sacrament through ignorance of the proper form.

Now we learn from the holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and also from the Apostle, that the form is : *This is My body*. For it is written : *Whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and brake, and gave to His disciples, and said: Take and eat, This is My Body.*¹

This form thus used by Christ our Lord Himself has been perpetually observed by the Catholic Church. The almost infinite testimonies of the holy Fathers and the well-known and easy accessible decree of the Council of Florence may be here omitted, especially as the fact may be established from the words of our Saviour : *Do this for a commemoration of Me*. For the command given by our Lord refers not only to what He did, but also to what He said ; and especially must it be referred to the words which He had uttered not only to signify, but also to accomplish.

The same truth is easily proved from reason. The form of a sacrament consists in the words which signify the effect produced by that sacrament. Now the words in question signify and declare the effect that is produced in the Eucharist—that is to say, the conversion of the bread into the true body of our Lord—and consequently it follows that those words constitute the form. The words *He blessed*, recorded by the Evangelist, may be understood in this sense. They seem to be equivalent to saying : “ Taking bread, He blessed it, saying : This is My body.”

¹ Matt. xxvi. 26 ; Mark xiv. 22 ; Luke xxii. 19 ; 1 Cor. xi. 24.

20.—Not all the words used in the consecration are necessary.

It is true that the Evangelist places the words *take and eat* before the words, *this is My body*, but it is evident that they refer to the use and not to the consecration of the matter. They must, indeed, be pronounced by the priest, just as the conjunction *for* must be also pronounced in the consecration of the body and blood, but they are not essential to the validity of the sacrament; otherwise it would follow that were there no one to receive the sacrament it should not, or even could not, be consecrated. And yet it is incontestable that the priest on pronouncing the words of our Lord, according to the institution and practice of the Church, truly consecrates the proper matter—bread—even though it should afterwards happen that the Blessed Eucharist should be administered to no one.

21.—The form to be used in the consecration of the wine.

With regard to the consecration of the form, which is the other element of this sacrament, it is necessary, for the reasons already assigned, that the priest should thoroughly know its form.

Now, it is firmly to be believed that the form consists in the words: "THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD, OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT, THE MYSTERY OF FAITH, WHICH SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY TO THE REMISSION OF SINS." Of these words, the greater part are taken from holy Scripture, while the others have been preserved in the Church by Apostolic tradition. The words, *This is the chalice*,¹ are taken from St. Luke and from the Apostle;² the words that come next: *Of My blood*, or *My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many to the remission of sins*, are taken partly from St. Luke and partly from St. Matthew;³ while as regards the words *eternal*, and *mystery of faith*, they have been handed down to us by tradition, the interpreter and guardian of the Catholic faith.

22.—This is the true form.

Concerning the truth of this form there can be no doubt, if what has been already said regarding the form of the consecration of the bread is borne in mind. It is certain that the form consists in those words which signify the change of the substance of the wine into the blood of the Lord. Now the words in question clearly indicate this change; and hence it is evident that they, and they alone, constitute the proper form. Moreover, these words also denote certain admirable effects of the

¹ Luke xxii. 20.² 1 Cor. xi. 25.³ Luke xxii. 20.; Matt. xxvi. 28.

blood of Christ which was poured forth in the passion, and which pertain in a special way to this sacrament. The first is admission to the eternal inheritance which has been given to us by right of the *New and Eternal Testament*; the second is admission to justice by *the mystery of faith*, for God hath established Jesus to be a propitiation *through faith in His blood, that He Himself may be just and the justifier of him who is of the faith of Jesus Christ*,¹ the third effect is *the remission of sins*.²

23. — Explanation of the form of consecration of the wine. Now, as these words of consecration are replete with mysteries, and as they are perfectly appropriate to the object they express, we must examine them carefully. The words, *This is the chalice of My blood*, signify: "This is My blood which is contained in this chalice." Well and rightly is mention made of the chalice at the moment in which the blood, which is the drink of the faithful, is being consecrated—for were the blood not contained in some vessel it would not sufficiently seem to indicate that it is precisely such a drink. Next come the words: *Of the New Testament*, which are added to show us that the blood of Jesus Christ is not now given merely as a figure, as was the case in the Old Law (of which St. Paul remarks, in the Epistle to the Hebrews,³ that without blood a Testament is not dedicated); but is really and truly given as becomes the character of the New Testament. Hence St. Paul says: *Christ therefore is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of His death they who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance*.⁴ As for the word *eternal*, it refers to the eternal inheritance which has become ours by the death of Christ the Lord, our eternal Testator.

The addition: *mystery of faith*, does not exclude the reality, but signifies that what is hidden and infinitely above the power of the mortal eye is to be believed with firm faith. The meaning here attached to these words is quite different from that which they have when applied to Baptism. The fact that it is by faith that we see the blood of Christ concealed under the appearances of wine is called a *mystery of faith*; while Baptism is rightly called a "sacrament of faith" by us, and a "mystery of faith" by the Greeks, because it embraces an entire profession of Christian faith.

Another reason why we call the blood of Christ a *mystery of faith* is because the mind of man experiences the utmost

¹ Rom. iii. 25.² Heb. ix. 22.³ ix. 18.⁴ Heb. ix. 15.

difficulty and trouble in the fact that faith proposes for our belief that the true Son of God, Christ our Lord, Himself true God and true Man, suffered death for us—a death which is precisely signified by the sacrament of His blood. Hence the passion of the Lord is more appropriately commemorated here by the words : *which shall be shed for the remission of sins*, rather than at the consecration of His body. For the blood, by being separately consecrated, possesses much more force and vividness in putting before our eyes the passion of our Lord, His death, and the nature of His sufferings.

The additional words : *For you and for many*, are taken, some from St. Matthew, the others from St. Luke, and have been combined by the Church under the inspiration of God. They serve to express the fruits and the advantages of the passion. If in fact we consider the efficiency of the passion, we must acknowledge that the blood of the Saviour was shed for the salvation of all mankind ; but if we regard the fruits derived from it we see at once that they do not extend to all, but to many. In saying, then, *For you*, He signified thereby either all those who were present and to whom He spoke, with the exception of Judas, or the elect amongst the Jewish people—His disciples, for instance. In adding *For many*, He wished to include the rest of the elect, whether among the Jews or the Gentiles. Rightly, therefore, were the words *For all* left unsaid, because He here speaks of the fruit of His passion alone which brought the fruit of salvation to none but the elect. The words of the Apostle : *Jesus Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many*,¹ point to this fact ; as do the words of our Lord recorded by St. John : *I pray for them ; I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine*.²

There are many other mysteries in these words of consecration ; but pastors by frequent meditation and study of divine things will, with the assistance of God, easily discover them of themselves.

IV.—THE REAL PRESENCE

24.—The Eucharist to be judged by faith, not by the senses.

We must now resume the explanation of those truths concerning which the faithful must on no account be left in ignorance.

And as the Apostle lays it down that an enormous crime

¹ Heb. ix. 28.

² John xvii. 9.

is committed by those who *do not discern the body of the Lord*,¹ the pastor will first of all teach the faithful that their mind and understanding must be detached as far as possible from the dominion of the senses ; for were they to persuade themselves that in the sacrament of the Eucharist is contained nothing but what the senses announce, they would at once be guilty of the enormous impiety of believing that this sacrament contains nothing but bread and wine, since sight, touch, taste, and smell reveal the appearances of bread and wine, and nothing more. Their minds, therefore, must, as far as possible, be withdrawn from the influence of the senses and raised to the contemplation of the infinite virtue and power of God.

25.—The words of consecration accomplish three things.

The Catholic faith unhesitatingly believes and teaches that in this sacrament three stupendous effects are accomplished by the words of consecration :—

(a) The first is, that the true body and blood of Christ our Lord—the self-same body that was born of the Virgin and that now sits at the right hand of the Father—is contained in the Eucharist ;

(b) The second, repugnant and contradictory though it may seem to the evidence of the senses, is that none of the substance of the elements remains in the sacrament ;

(c) And the third, which is easily inferred from the other two, and which is also positively expressed by the words of consecration, is that the accidents which appear to the eyes or present themselves to the other senses, exist in a wonderful and ineffable manner without a subject. We still see the accidents of bread and wine ; but they inhere in no substance—they subsist of themselves ; while as for the substance of bread and wine it is so changed into the very body and blood of Jesus Christ as to cease absolutely to be any longer the substance of bread and wine.

26.—Scripture proof of the real presence—our Lord's own words.

Beginning with the first of these three effects, the pastor will endeavour to show how clear and explicit are the words of our Saviour establishing the real presence of His body in the Eucharist. And in fact when He says : *This is My body : This is My blood*, no one in his senses can fail to see the meaning

of the words, especially as they regard His human nature, the truth of which Catholic faith forbids us to call into doubt. As the learned and holy St. Hilary, speaking of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, admirably remarks that since our Lord Jesus Christ expressly declared that His flesh is truly food, and since our faith teaches the same truth, it is impossible to entertain the slightest doubt on the matter.

27.—Another passage of sacred Scripture. The pastor will also explain another passage in which it is clearly seen that the body and blood of our Lord are really contained in the Eucharist. After having recorded the consecration of bread and wine by our Lord, and the distribution of the sacred mysteries to the Apostles, the Apostle adds: *But let a man prove himself, and so eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.*¹ Now if, as the heretics untiringly assert, there is nothing presented for our veneration in this sacrament but a memorial and sign of the passion of Christ, why did the Apostle make use of so strong an expression to exhort the faithful to prove themselves? By that terrible word *judgment*, the Apostle declared that an abominable crime is committed by him who unworthily receives and does not distinguish from other kinds of food the body and blood concealed under the Eucharistic species—a doctrine he had already more fully developed in the preceding chapter of the same Epistle wherein he said: *The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?*²—words which clearly prove the real presence of the body and blood of Christ.

28.—The teaching of the Church—the doctrine of the Fathers. These passages of Scripture will, then, be expounded by the pastor, and he will be careful to show his flock that their meaning is in no way doubtful nor uncertain, especially in view of the fact that the Church of God has pronounced upon them by her infallible authority. This may be ascertained readily in two ways.

(a) The first is by consulting the Fathers who flourished in the early ages of the Church, and in each succeeding century, and who are the most trustworthy witnesses of her doctrine. Now

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29.

² 1 Cor. x. 16.

all these unanimously and unmistakably teach the truth of this dogma. It would be an endless task to quote the words of each one—it will be sufficient to cite or rather indicate a few from whose words we may learn the belief of the many.

First of all, then, let St. Ambrose profess his faith. In his book on "The Initiated," he declares that in this sacrament is received the very body of Christ just as it was derived from the Virgin, and that this is a truth to be held with firm faith. In another place he teaches that previous to consecration there is only bread, but after consecration it is the flesh of Christ.

Let our second witness, and one not less important and worthy of faith, be St. John Chrysostom. He professes and teaches the self-same truth in a multitude of passages, but especially in his sixtieth homily on "Those who receive the sacred mysteries unworthily;" and also in his forty-fourth and forty-sixth homilies on St. John: "Let us," he says, "obey God, not contradict Him, even though what He says seems to be opposed to our reason and our senses—His word is infallible, while our senses are easily deceived."

With this doctrine, the teaching of St. Augustine—that zealous defender of Catholic faith—is in complete harmony, especially in his explanation of the thirty-third Psalm, where he writes: "It is impossible to man to carry himself in his own hands—that is peculiar to Christ alone; for in His own hands was He carried, when distributing His own body He said: *This is My body.*"

As well as St. Justin and St. Irenæus, St. Cyril in his fourth book on St. John affirms so clearly that the true body of our Lord is contained in this sacrament, that his words can be twisted or obscured by no false or captious interpretation.

Should the pastor desire additional testimonies of the holy Fathers, it will be easy to cite St. Denis, St. Hilary, St. Jerome, St. John Damascene, and countless others whose weighty opinions on this subject have been collected and may be read in the easily accessible works of pious and learned men.

(b) The second means of ascertaining the teaching of the Church on matters of faith is the condemnation of contrary doctrines and opinions. Now it is quite certain that belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was always spread throughout the universal Church, and unanimously received by all the faithful, so much so that when Berengarius five hundred years

29.—In the condemnation of errors.

ago* dared to deny it, and asserted that it was nothing more than a sign, he was unanimously condemned in the Council of Vercelli, which was immediately convoked by Leo IX, and was led to anathematize his heresy. And when, later on, he relapsed into his impious error, he was condemned anew by three different Councils—one at Tours, and the two others at Rome, which latter were convoked by Nicholas II and Gregory VIII. Innocent III confirmed these decisions later on in the general Council of the Lateran. Finally, the Councils of Florence and Trent fixed and defined this dogma with still greater precision.

If, then, the pastor will carefully set forth all these authorities, he will be able, while ignoring those who, blinded by error, hate nothing so much as the light of truth, to strengthen the weak and fill the souls of the pious with consolation and joy; and all the more so as the faithful cannot doubt that this dogma is to be numbered amongst the articles of faith. They in fact who believe and profess that God is Almighty, must also believe that in Him the power is not wanting to accomplish the great work which we admire and adore in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Finally, they who believe in the holy Catholic Church must of necessity recognize that the doctrine is such as we have expounded.

30.—The dignity
of the Church
manifested in
this sacrament.

Now, there is nothing that can contribute so much to the joy and advantage of pious souls as the contemplation of the sublime dignity of this sacrament. By it they learn, first of all, how great must be the perfection of the Law of the Gospel which possesses in reality that which was shadowed forth under the Mosaic Law in signs and figures only. Hence it has been well said by St. Denis that our Church is a mean between the synagogue and the heavenly Jerusalem, and participates of the nature of both one and the other. The faithful, then, can never sufficiently admire the perfection, the glory, and the greatness of holy Church, which is but one degree removed from the bliss of heaven. For in common with the inhabitants of heaven we, too, as well as they, possess Christ, God and Man, in our midst. In one degree we are indeed below them, and it consists in this, that they enjoy the presence of Christ in Beatific Vision; while we do indeed, with firm and unwavering faith, adore His presence—but it is a presence invisible to our eyes, and concealed under the miraculous veil of the sacred mysteries.

* That is, in the eleventh century.

Finally, the faithful experience in this sacrament a proof of the perfect love of Christ our Saviour towards us. Well did it become His goodness not to withdraw from our midst that nature which He assumed for our sake, but as far as possible to desire to dwell amongst us, so as to verify unceasingly and truthfully the words: *My delight is to be with the children of Men.*¹

V.—CHRIST IS WHOLE AND ENTIRE IN THE EUCHARIST

31.—Jesus Christ
whole and
entire in the
Eucharist.

Here the pastor will explain to the faithful that in this sacrament are contained not only the true body of Jesus Christ, along with all that goes to constitute a true body, such, for instance as bones and nerves, but also Christ whole and entire. He must point out that Christ is the name of a God and of a man, that is to say, of one Person in whom are united the divine and human natures; and hence that He possesses both substances, as well as all that each substance involves—the Divinity and the Humanity whole and entire, consisting of soul and body and blood—all of which we must believe to be contained in the sacrament. For since in heaven the whole Humanity is united to the Divinity in one Person and Hypostasis, it is impious to suppose that the body which is present in the Eucharist is separated from the same Divinity.

32.—Not all things,
however, are
in the Euchar-
ist in the same
manner.

The pastor, however, will take care to observe that all things are not contained in this sacrament in the same manner nor by the same virtue. For there are some things which we say are present in virtue of, and by force of, consecration. The words of consecration effect what they signify, and hence sacred writers say that in the sacrament, and by virtue of the sacrament, is present that which is expressed by the form of the words. Hence it is their opinion that were it possible that one thing could be detached from all the rest, there would be contained in the sacrament only that, and that alone, which the form signifies.

On the other hand, there are some things contained in this sacrament precisely because they are inseparably united to those things which are expressed in the form. Thus, as the form, *This is My body*, used to consecrate the bread, denotes the body

¹ Prov. viii. 31.

of our Lord, it is precisely the body of the Lord that is contained in the Eucharist, by virtue of the sacrament. But as the blood, soul, and Divinity are inseparable from the body, they, too, will be present in the sacrament, not indeed by virtue of consecration but because they are inseparably united to the body—which mode of presence in the sacrament is called *concomitance*. Clearly, then, Jesus Christ is whole and entire in the sacrament—when two things are really united, where one is the other must be also. Hence it follows that Jesus Christ, whole and entire, is contained under the species of bread and of wine to such an extent, that as the species of bread contains not only the body but also the blood—nay, Jesus Christ whole and entire—so also the species of wine contains not only the blood, but also the body, and Christ whole and entire.

33.—Reason for
two separate
consecrations.

Now, although the faithful must be absolutely certain and convinced that this is the case, wisely has it been ordained that two separate consecrations should take place—first of all, the better to represent the passion of our Lord, in which His blood was separated from His body—and hence it is that in the consecration we make mention of the effusion of His blood; and secondly, because as this sacrament is to be used by us for the nourishment of our souls, it was highly fitting that it should be instituted under the form of food and drink—two things which clearly constitute the complete sustenance of man.

34.—Christ is
whole and entire
in each
particle.

Nor is it to be forgotten that not only is Jesus Christ whole and entire in each species, but in each particle of each species. St. Augustine thus writes: "Each one receives our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is whole and entire in the portion received by each—He is not diminished by being received by each, but gives Himself whole and entire to each?" The same truth is also easily inferred from the Evangelists. It must not, however, be imagined that each piece of bread was consecrated by our Lord with a separate form, but that all the bread then used in the sacred mystery was consecrated in one form, and in a quantity sufficient to be distributed to all the Apostles. This clearly happened in the case of the chalice, since He Himself said: *Take, and divide it among you.*¹

¹ Luke xxii. 17.

All that has been thus far said is intended to enable the pastor to show that the true body and true blood of Christ are contained in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

VI.—TRANSUBSTANTIATION

35.—After the consecration the substance of neither bread nor wine remains. The pastor will now turn to the second point to be explained, and will show that after consecration the substance of the bread and wine no longer remains in the sacrament. And extraordinary though this may seem, yet it is only a necessary consequence of what we have already demonstrated.

If, in fact, after consecration, the body of Jesus Christ is really present under the appearance of bread and wine, and since they were not there before, it must of necessity have taken place either by change of place, or by creation, or by the conversion of some other thing into it. Now, it is altogether impossible that the body of Christ is present in the Eucharist through a mere change of place; for if that were so, He should first quit heaven, since a body cannot move without leaving the place from which it moves. It is even less credible that the body of Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist through creation—nay, the very idea is inconceivable. It remains, therefore, for our Lord's body to be present in the Eucharist, by bread being changed into His body; and hence the substance of bread necessarily ceases to exist.

36.—Transubstantiation approved by the Councils and founded on Scripture. Hence the Fathers of the general Councils of the Lateran and of Florence confirmed the truth of this doctrine by solemn decrees, while it was still more fully defined by the Council of Trent in these words: "If anyone shall say that in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains along with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."

This doctrine is easily inferred from the words of sacred Scripture: Thus our Lord in instituting this sacrament, said: *This is My body*. Now the word *this* denotes the entire substance of the thing present; and hence if the substance of the bread still remained, our Lord absolutely could not truly say:

This is My body. Next, our Lord says, in St. John : *The bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world*¹—thus calling His flesh bread. A little further on He adds : *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you* ;² and also : *My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*³ Now, when in terms thus clear and distinct, He calls His flesh bread, and *meat indeed*, and His blood *drink indeed*, it is quite evident that none of the substance of the bread and wine remains any longer in the sacrament.

37.—And confirmed by the testimony of the Fathers. Whoever turns over the pages of the Fathers, will at once recognize that such was ever their unanimous teaching. St. Ambrose, for instance, thus writes : “ You will say, perhaps, ‘ This bread is simply ordinary bread ; ’ true it is that it is ordinary bread previous to consecration ; but let consecration once take place, and that bread becomes the flesh of Christ.” To illustrate this more fully, he brings forward various comparisons and explanations. In another passage, in his explanation of the Psalmist’s words : *Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done, in heaven and on earth*,⁴ he says : “ Although we see the form of bread and wine, yet faith tells us that after consecration it is nothing else than the flesh and blood of Christ.”

St. Hilary makes use of almost the same words to express the same truth, and teaches that the body and blood of the Lord are really in the Eucharist, even though they seem externally to be bread and wine.

38.—The Eucharist sometimes called bread after the consecration. Here the pastor will do well to warn the faithful that they are not to be surprised if, even after consecration, the Eucharist is sometimes called bread. The reason is, first, that the Eucharist still preserves the appearances of bread, and secondly because it retains the natural quality of bread, which is to nourish and sustain the body. Moreover, it is the practice of sacred Scripture to name things as they appear to be, as may clearly be seen in Genesis,⁵ where it is said that three men appeared to Abraham, while in reality they were three angels. In like manner, the two angels who appeared to the Apostles after the ascension of our Lord into heaven, are called men, not angels.⁶

¹ John vi. 52 ² John vi. 54. ³ John vi. 56. ⁴ Ps. cxxxiv. 6. ⁵ Gen. xviii. 2.
⁶ Acts i. 10.

VII.—THE MANNER OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION

39.—The substance of the bread and wine is converted into the substance of the body and blood of the Lord.

It is, indeed, very difficult to give a perfect exposition of this mystery. The pastor will, however, endeavour to explain to those who are more advanced in the knowledge of divine things, the manner of this wonderful conversion. As for those who are yet weak in faith, they might possibly be overwhelmed by the sublimity of this doctrine. This change, then, is such that by the power of God the entire substance of bread is changed into the entire substance of the body of Christ, and the entire substance of the wine into the entire substance of His blood, and this without the slightest change in our Lord Himself—He is neither begotten, nor changed, nor increased, but remains whole and entire in His substance. Explaining this mystery, St. Ambrose says: "You see how powerful are the words of Christ. Now, if His word is so powerful as to be able to call into existence what did not previously exist, namely, the world, how much more efficacious is His word to give a new being to what already exists, and change it into another thing?"

Many other ancient and authoritative Fathers have written to the same effect. Thus St. Augustine says: "We unhesitatingly confess that before consecration they are bread and wine just as nature made them; but after consecration they are the body and blood of Christ which the words of consecration have rendered present." And St. John Damascene writes: "The body is truly united to the Divinity—that body which was born of the Virgin; not that the body thus assumed descended from heaven, but because bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ."

40.—This change is properly called Transubstantiation

This admirable change, as the Council of Trent taught, is aptly and rightly called Transubstantiation by the Catholic Church. Just as natural generation is rightly called transformation, because of the fact that the form therein is changed; so in like manner the word transubstantiation was rightly and wisely introduced by our predecessors in the faith to express the fact that in the Eucharist the whole substance of one thing passes into the whole substance of another thing.

In accordance with the repeated admonition of the holy Fathers, the faithful should be cautioned not to search too curiously into the manner in which this change is effected. It is beyond our comprehension and we find no similar example in natural changes, nor in the very work of creation. Faith tells us that it is so; but as to the manner in which it takes place we must not be over curious.

The pastor should be no less prudent in explaining how the body of Christ is contained whole and entire under the very smallest particle of bread—indeed, discussions of this kind need seldom be entered upon. But should Christian charity demand it, the pastor will bear in mind first of all, to fortify the minds of the faithful by the words of the Gospel: *No word shall be impossible to God.*¹

In the next place, he will show that Christ our Lord is not present in this sacrament as in a place. Place relates to things only in so far as they have magnitude. Now, when we say that Christ our Lord is present in this sacrament, we do not assert that this has any reference to whether He is great or small—terms which concern quantity—but simply in His substance. For the substance of bread is changed into the substance of Christ—not into magnitude or quantity; while substance, as must be acknowledged by all, is contained just as much in a small as in a large space. For instance, the substance of air and its entire nature is necessarily as much in a small as in a large quantity of air; and in the same way the whole nature of water is no less entire in a tiny glass than in a great river. Since, then, the body of our Lord succeeds the substance of bread, we must acknowledge that it is present in the sacrament after the same manner as the substance of the bread was before consecration—whether in a greater or lesser quantity is a matter of perfect indifference.

VIII.—THE ACCIDENTS OF THE BREAD AND WINE

We now come to the third great and wonderful effect of this sacrament—an effect, however, the explanation of which is much facilitated by what has been already said regarding the two other

43.—The accidents remain without a subject.

¹ Luke i. 37.

effects—and it is that the species of bread and wine exist in this sacrament without a subject. As we have already shown, the body and blood of our Lord are truly contained in this sacrament, and in such a manner that absolutely nothing of the substance of the bread and wine remains. And as they cannot inhere in the body and blood of Christ, they must, therefore, contrary to the laws of nature, necessarily subsist by themselves, supported by no other subject. This has been the uniform and constant teaching of the Catholic Church, and it is easily established by the testimony of the same witnesses who have been already brought forward to demonstrate that in the Eucharist there remains nothing of the substance of the bread and wine.

44.—The Eucharist—why instituted under the appearances of bread and wine.

Nothing becomes the piety of the faithful more than to lay aside difficult questions, venerate and adore the majesty of this sacrament, and admire the bountiful providence of God in establishing these sacred mysteries under the appearances of bread and wine. To eat human flesh or drink human blood is abhorrent to human nature, and hence God in His wisdom ordained that His most holy body and blood should be administered under the appearances of bread and wine, which are our daily and common food, and which are especially agreeable to us.

To this we may add two other advantages—first, we are freed from the calumnious accusations of unbelievers, which could not be so easily answered if we were seen to eat the Lord under His own form; and secondly, because in receiving the body and blood of the Lord in a manner imperceptible to the senses, we possess a powerful means of increasing our faith. For faith, as St. Gregory says, “has no merit where reason furnishes proof.”

All that we have said, however, should be laid before the faithful only with extreme prudence, and with due regard to their capacity, and to the particular circumstances of each case.

IX.—THE EFFECTS OF THE EUCHARIST

45.—The salutary effects of the Eucharist should be also explained.

With regard to the admirable virtue and fruits of the Eucharist, there is no class of persons to whom a knowledge of them is not useful, none to whom it is not even highly necessary. All

that has been already said at such great length on the Eucharist has been set forth for the particular purpose of making the faithful sensible of the advantages of this sacrament. But as all its immense advantages and its fruits cannot be adequately expressed in words, the pastor will select one or two points in order to show the abundance and profusion of graces contained in these sacred mysteries.

46.—The Eucharist is the source of all the sacraments

He will to a certain extent accomplish this object if, having first explained the nature and efficacy of the other sacraments, he will then compare the Eucharist to a fountain, the other sacraments to rivulets. Truly is it called the source of all graces, for it contains, and in an admirable manner, the Source of all gifts and graces, the Author of all the sacraments—Christ our Lord, from whom as from their source they derive all the goodness and perfection they possess. From this comparison, therefore, it will not be difficult to infer the wonderful treasures of divine grace which are bestowed on us in this sacrament.

47.—It confers on the soul the same benefits as are conferred on the body by bread and wine.

It will be also useful to consider the nature of bread and wine, which are symbols of the Eucharist. What bread and wine are to the body, the Eucharist is, in a higher and more perfect way, to the health and happiness of the soul. The sacrament is not, indeed, like bread and wine, changed into our substance, but we ourselves are, in a certain sense, changed into its nature, so that the words of St. Augustine may be very well applied here: "I am the food of the grown; grow and thou shalt have part in this food; thou shalt not change Me into thee, as thou dost to the food of thy body—but thou shalt be changed into Me."

48.—Gives grace.

If, then, grace and truth come by Jesus Christ, they surely must be poured into that soul which worthily and holily receives Him who says of Himself: *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him.*¹ It cannot be doubted that those who receive this sacrament with sentiments of faith and piety receive the Son of God into their souls, in such a way as to be united, like living members, to His body. For it is written: *He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me;*² as also: *The bread which I will give is My*

¹ John vi. 57.

² John vi. 58.

*flesh for the life of the world.*¹ Interpreting this passage, St. Cyril says: "The Word of God, uniting Himself to His own flesh, rendered it vivifying. It became Him, therefore, to unite Himself to our bodies in a wonderful manner through His sacred flesh and precious blood, which in virtue of His vivifying benediction we receive in the bread and wine."

49.—A state of grace necessary to receive worthily. But in saying that grace is given in the Eucharist let the pastor take care to point out that this does not mean that to receive this sacrament worthily, it is not necessary to be already in the state of grace. Natural food is of no use to the dead—in like manner, the sacred mysteries are of no avail to that soul which does not live by the spirit. Hence it is that they have been instituted under the appearances of bread and wine to show that their object is not to restore life to the soul, but to preserve the life that already exists in the soul.

That grace is bestowed in the Eucharist is, then, to be taken in the sense that even *first* grace, which all should have before they presume to touch the Holy Eucharist with their lips (lest *they eat and drink judgment to themselves*), is given to those only who have the desire and resolution to receive this sacrament—it is the end of all the sacraments, the symbol of the unity and brotherhood of the members of the Church outside of which none can obtain grace.

50.—Increases the life of the soul. Moreover, the body is not only supported but also increased by natural food, and from it the taste derives new relish and pleasure every day; so in like manner the Eucharistic food not only sustains the life of the soul, but fortifies it, and enables it to be more and more delighted with divine things. Rightly, then, do we say that grace is given in this sacrament, which is well compared to the manna, *having in it the sweetness of every taste.*²

51.—Remits venial sins. It cannot be questioned that lighter offences, known as venial sins, are remitted and pardoned by the Eucharist. All that the soul may have lost through the ardour of passion, by the commission of slight offences—all this the Eucharist repairs by cancelling these lesser faults, in the same way as (to keep to the comparison already made) we experience that the daily waste and loss,

¹ John vi. 52.² Wisd. xvi. 20.

which is caused by the vital heat within us, is gradually restored and repaired by natural food. Justly, therefore, has it been said of this heavenly sacrament, by St. Ambrose: "This daily bread is taken as a remedy for daily infirmities." This, however, is to be understood of those sins only by which the soul is not deeply seared.

52.—Bestows strength against temptations, and concupiscence.

Another effect of the sacred mysteries is to preserve us pure, undefiled, and safe from the assaults of temptation, and, like a heavenly antidote, to secure the soul against being infected and corrupted by the insidious virulence of deadly disease. Hence it was, as St. Cyprian records, that when of old the faithful were being hurried in multitudes to torments and death for the name of Jesus Christ, it was the received custom of the Catholic Church for the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord to be administered to them by the bishops, to guard them from the danger of being overcome by the violence of their torments, and so yielding in the saving combat. Furthermore it represses and subdues the lust of the flesh—in proportion as it inflames the soul with the fire of charity it must of necessity extinguish the fire of concupiscence.

53. — Facilitates the attainment of eternal glory.

Finally, to comprise in a few words, all the advantages and blessings of this sacrament, it will be enough to say that in the Blessed Eucharist there exists a sovereign help towards the attainment of eternal glory. It is written: *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*¹ By the grace imparted by the Eucharist the faithful, even in this life, enjoy deep peace and tranquillity of soul; and when the time comes to leave this mortal life, like Elias who, *in the strength of the hearth-cake,*² walked to Horeb, the Mount of God, those who have been invigorated by this sacrament ascend to eternal bliss and glory.

It will be easy for the pastor to explain all this at greater length by dwelling on the sixth chapter of St. John, in which the manifold effects of the Eucharist are indicated; or if surveying the admirable actions of our Lord, he shall show that if we justly and deservedly account those happy beyond measure who received Him beneath their roof during His mortal life, or

¹ John vi. 55.

² 3 Kings xix. 6.

who were restored to health by *touching His garment*,¹ or even the *hem of His garment*, how much more happy we into whose souls He, now that He is in possession of immortal glory, does not disdain to enter to heal all our wounds, and share with us that glory which is replete with every good and perfect gift.

X.—THE MANNER OF RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST IS THREEFOLD

54.—Three classes of communicants. To excite the faithful to be *zealous for better gifts*,² it is now necessary to indicate who they are by whom the abundant fruits of the Eucharist, which have been already enumerated, are obtained, and to show that there is more than one way of communicating. Rightly, then, did our predecessors, as we read in the Council of Trent, distinguish three ways of receiving the Blessed Eucharist.

(a) Some there are who receive the sacrament only ; such are those sinners who fear not to receive the holy mysteries with polluted lips and hearts, and who, as the Apostle says, eat and drink the body of the Lord unworthily.³ Of these St. Augustine writes . “ He who does not dwell in Christ, and in whom Christ does not dwell, certainly does not eat His flesh spiritually, even though carnally and visibly he presses the body and blood of the Lord under his teeth.” Not only, then, do they who receive the holy mysteries with such dispositions obtain no fruit thereby, but even, as the Apostle witnesses, *they eat and drink judgment to themselves*.⁴

(b) Others there are who are said to receive the Blessed Eucharist only spiritually, and they are those who, animated with that lively *faith which worketh by charity*,⁵ partake of this heavenly bread in wish and desire ; and if they do not receive all the fruits of the sacrament, they certainly receive a very considerable part thereof.

(c) Finally, there are those who receive the Blessed Eucharist both sacramentally and spiritually. Faithful to the Apostle’s teaching they first prove themselves, put on the nuptial robe, and then approach this divine banquet, thus deriving from the Eucharist all the copious blessings which we have enumerated above.

¹ Matt. ix. 20. ² 1 Cor. xii. 31. ³ 1 Cor. xi. 29. ⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 29. ⁵ Gal. v. 6.

It is clear, then, that those who have it in their power to prepare for and receive the sacrament of the body of the Lord, and who content themselves with making only a spiritual Communion, voluntarily deprive themselves of the choicest heavenly graces.

XI.—DISPOSITIONS NECESSARY FOR COMMUNION

55.—Preparation necessary before Communion. It should here be shown how the faithful should be prepared before approaching to receive the Blessed Eucharist sacramentally. And to make clear the strict necessity of this preparation, it will be useful first of all to propose our Saviour's example. Before giving His Apostles the sacrament of His precious body and blood, though they were already clean, He washed their feet to show us that we must take great care to neglect nothing that pertains to the purity and innocence of our souls when about to receive the sacred mysteries.

In the next place it should be made clear to the faithful that just as one who receives the Eucharist well-disposed and perfectly prepared is adorned with the choicest gifts of heavenly grace, so on the contrary he who approaches unprepared not only derives no advantage but even incurs the most serious loss and misfortunes. The very best and most salutary things possess this peculiarity, that when seasonably made use of they produce happy results, but on the contrary are pernicious and destructive when used unseasonably. Hence it is not to be wondered at that while the great and precious gifts of God, when received by a well-disposed soul, are a powerful help towards the attainment of heavenly glory, they, on the other hand, bring only eternal death to us if we receive them unworthily.

This is well illustrated by the example of the Ark of the Lord. The Israelites possessed nothing more sacred than the Ark of the Covenant. Through it the Lord had bestowed signal and numerous blessings on them. But when it was borne away by the Philistines it brought on them a deadly plague, and disastrous calamities, along with eternal disgrace. It is the same with food which, when received into a healthy stomach, sustains and nourishes the body; but on the contrary, it engenders grave disorders if received into a stomach that is indisposed and out of order.

56.—Preparation
of soul.

(a) The first preparation requisite is to know how to distinguish table from table—this sacred table from profane tables—this heavenly bread from common bread.¹ This we do, when we firmly believe that the Eucharist contains the true body and blood of the Lord, whom the angels adore in heaven, at whose orders *the pillars of heaven fear and tremble*,² of whose glory *all the earth is full*.³ This, as the Apostle instructs us, is to discern the body of the Lord, venerating the magnitude of the mystery rather than seeking to penetrate its essence by over-curious investigations.

(b) Another indispensable preparation is to ask ourselves if we are at peace with all others, if we love our neighbour truly and sincerely : *Therefore if thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there shall remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*.⁴

(c) In the third place we should carefully examine our conscience to see whether it is defiled by any mortal sin that has to be repented of and blotted out by the assistance of contrition and Confession [before Communion]. The Council of Trent has defined that to no one no matter how contrite, who is conscious of mortal sin on his soul, and who has an opportunity of confessing, is it lawful to receive the Blessed Eucharist, until he has purified himself by sacramental Confession.

(d) The fourth disposition necessary is to reflect in the silence of our souls how unworthy we are of the divine gift which is given us by the Lord ; and with the Centurion, of whom our Lord Himself declared He had not *found so great faith in Israel*, we should cry out from our hearts : *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof*.⁵

(e) Let us also ask ourselves whether we have the right to say along with St. Peter : *Lord Thou knowest that I love Thee*,⁶ and we should bear in mind that the man who sat down at the Lord's feast without a *nuptial garment* was cast *into exterior darkness*,⁷ and condemned to eternal torments.

57.—Preparation
of body.

Not alone is preparation of the soul necessary—there is need also for preparation of the body.

Thus, we must be fasting when we approach the holy table—that is to say, we must have neither eaten nor drunk anything from at least the preceding midnight up to the very moment in which we receive the Blessed Eucharist.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 21. ² Job xxvi. 11. ³ Is. vi. 3. ⁴ Matt. v. 23, 24. ⁵ Matt. viii. 8.
⁶ John xxi. 15. ⁷ Matt. xxii. 13.

These, then, are about all that should be observed by the faithful in preparing to receive the sacred mysteries profitably. All the other dispositions may be easily reduced to those heads which we have just enumerated.

XII.—OBLIGATION OF RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

58.—Each one bound to communicate at least once a year, but exhorted to communicate frequently.

To avoid the danger of people being made less prompt to receive this sacrament, on the pretext that the preparation demanded by them is too laborious and difficult, the faithful should be frequently reminded that the law regarding the reception of the Blessed Eucharist admits of no exceptions. Moreover, it has been decreed by the Church that whoever does not approach the holy table at least once a year—at Easter—runs the risk of excommunication.

Let not the faithful, however, imagine that it is enough to obey this precept and receive the Lord's body only once a year; but let them be well persuaded that they should receive Holy Communion frequently—whether monthly, or weekly, or daily cannot be decided by any fixed or general rule. The standard, however, laid down by St. Augustine admits of no doubt: "Live in such a manner as to be able to receive Holy Communion every day."

Hence it will be the pastor's duty to exhort the faithful frequently not to neglect to nourish their souls each day with this heavenly bread, just as they do not fail to supply their bodies each day with the necessary food, and to point out to them that spiritual food is not less necessary to the soul than corporal food to the body. It will be also very useful to recall to their minds the great and heavenly gifts which, as we have already pointed out, we derive from sacramental Communion; and it will also be useful to refer to that figure which is found in the manna with which the Israelites had to refresh their bodily powers each day. Along with this may be cited the authority of the Fathers who earnestly recommended the frequent reception of this sacrament. The words: "You sin daily—communicate daily" do not express the opinion of St. Augustine alone, but anyone who pays attention to the subject will easily see that such was the opinion of all the Fathers who have written on the question.

59.—The practice of the ancient Church regarding frequent Communion.

Indeed we see from the Acts of the Apostles, that there was a time when the faithful received the Blessed Sacrament every day. All who then professed the Christian religion were inflamed with such true and generous charity that devoting themselves unceasingly to prayer and other works of piety, they were ever found prepared to receive the holy mysteries of the Lord's body daily. Later on, when this usage seems to have been interrupted, the holy Pope and martyr, Anacletus, partially revived it. He decreed that all the ministers assisting at the Sacrifice of the Mass should approach Holy Communion, affirming that the practice was of Apostolic institution. Moreover, it was for a long time the practice of the Church that, as soon as the Sacrifice was complete, and when the priest had himself taken the Blessed Eucharist, he turned to the congregation, and invited the faithful to the holy table in these words: "Brethren, approach to receive Communion." And thereupon those who were prepared received the sacred mysteries with deepest fervour and devotion.

But the time came when charity and love of piety had grown so cold that the faithful approached only very rarely to Holy Communion. Then it was laid down by Pope Fabian that all should receive the Blessed Eucharist three times a year—at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. This rule was in course of time confirmed by many Councils, and especially by the first of Agdé.

Matters having at length reached such a degree of decay that not only was that holy and salutary practice neglected, but Communion was even deferred for several years. The general Council of the Lateran decreed that all the faithful should receive the Lord's body at least once a year at Easter, and that those who neglected to do so should be cut off from the society of the faithful.

60.—Children before the use of reason not to receive Communion.

Although this law, sanctioned as it is by the authority of God and His Church, concerns all the faithful, it must, however, be explained that they who by reason of their tender age have not yet arrived at the use of reason are exempt from the obligation. They are incapable of distinguishing the Blessed Eucharist from unconsecrated and common bread, and consequently cannot bring with them to its reception the requisite piety and devotion. In any event it would seem inconsistent to act otherwise; for in

instituting this sacrament our Lord said : *Take and eat*—words which seem to exclude infants who clearly are unable of themselves to take and eat. In some places, indeed, an ancient practice existed of administering the Blessed Eucharist even to infants ; but for the reasons already mentioned, as well as on account of motives in keeping with Christian piety, the practice in question has been long discontinued by the authority of the Church.

61.—The age at which children should communicate. With regard to the age at which the holy mysteries should be given to children, the father and the confessor will be the best judges—to them it belongs to examine and ascertain from the children whether they have a sufficient knowledge of, and a desire for, this sacrament.

62.—The insane. To those labouring under insanity, and at the same time incapable of acts of piety, the Eucharist should not be administered. If, however, before falling into insanity they have evinced sentiments of piety and religion, the Blessed Eucharist may, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Carthage, be administered to them, provided no danger of vomiting, or other indignity and inconvenience is apprehended.

XIII.—COMMUNION UNDER BOTH SPECIES

63.—The celebrant alone to communicate under both species. Regarding the rite to be observed in communicating, the pastor will explain that the law of the Church forbids anyone except the priest consecrating the body of our Lord in the sacrifice to communicate under both species, unless by special permission of the Church. For although it is true, as the Council of Trent points out, that Christ our Lord at the last supper instituted and administered this sacrament under the species both of bread and wine, nevertheless it does not follow that by doing so our Lord and Saviour established a law that the sacred mysteries should be administered to all the faithful under both kinds. Nay, even He Himself, when speaking of this sacrament, often makes mention of it under one kind only, as, for instance : *If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever ; and the bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world ; and : He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.*¹

¹ John vi. 52, etc.

64.—Reasons for this legislation. It will be clear, however, that the Church was influenced by many and cogent reasons in not only approving of the practice of communicating under only one kind, but in also confirming it by solemn decree:—

(a) In the first place, no precaution should be omitted to guard against the blood of our Lord being spilled on the ground—an accident that could not easily be avoided if the chalice had to be administered to a large crowd of people.

(b) In the second place, since the Blessed Eucharist should be always in readiness for the sick, it was greatly to be feared that, were the species of wine left long unconsumed, it might turn acid.

(c) In the third place, there are very many who cannot bear the taste or even smell of wine; and hence the Church very wisely ordained that the faithful should communicate under the species of bread alone. Otherwise what is intended for the nutriment of the soul might prove injurious to the health of the body.

(d) It may also be added that in many countries wine is extremely scarce and can only be procured at great expense from distant lands.

(e) Finally—and most important of all—it was necessary to uproot the heresy of those who pretended that Jesus Christ was not whole and entire under each species, but that His body alone was contained under the species of bread, and His blood alone under the species of wine. In order, therefore, to bring the truth of Catholic teaching more plainly before the eyes of all, Communion under only one kind—that of bread—was most wisely introduced.

Other reasons for this usage have been collected by those who have written on the matter, and can easily be explained by the pastor if he thinks it necessary.

XIV.—THE MINISTER OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

65.—Priests alone are the proper ministers of the Eucharist. We have now to speak of the minister, not that many are in ignorance as to this point but in order not to omit anything connected with the doctrine of the Eucharist.

The pastor, then, will teach that to priests alone has been given the power to consecrate and to administer the Blessed

Eucharist. The usage in the Church has always been, the Council of Trent explains, for the people to receive Communion from the hands of the priest, and for the celebrant to communicate himself—a usage which, as the Council has shown, proceeds from Apostolic tradition, and must be scrupulously retained, especially in view of the fact that Christ our Lord left us a striking example when He consecrated His most sacred body and with His own hands distributed it to His Apostles.

The laity are
even forbidden
to touch the
sacred vessels.

Moreover, to enhance as much as possible the dignity of so august a sacrament, not only has the power of administering it been confined to priests alone, but by a special law the Church has forbidden all who are not in Orders to touch the sacred vessels, the linen, or other things connected with the consecration, unless in case of necessity.

Both priests and people may hence learn with what sentiments of piety and holiness those should be filled who consecrate, administer, or receive the Blessed Eucharist.

66.—The unworthiness of the priest does not lessen the efficacy of the sacrament.

At the same time, what has been already said regarding the other sacraments—that they are validly administered, even by unholy hands provided the matter and form are properly employed—holds good with regard to the sacrament of the Eucharist. Faith teaches us that the effect of the sacraments does not depend on the merit of the minister, but on the power and virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such, then, are the truths to be set forth regarding the Eucharist considered as a sacrament.

DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF THE COUNCIL ON DAILY COMMUNION

(20th December, 1905)

THE Council of Trent, having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace derived by the faithful from the reception of the Most Holy Eucharist, makes the following declaration: "The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate not only spiritually, but also sacramentally."¹ These words plainly declare the wish of the Church that all Christians should be daily nourished by this heavenly banquet, and should derive therefrom more and more abundant fruits of sanctification.

The wish of Jesus
Christ.

And this wish of the Council is in perfect agreement with that desire wherewith Christ our Lord was inflamed when He instituted this divine sacrament.

More than once, and in no ambiguous terms, He Himself pointed out the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood frequently, especially in these words: *This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever.*² Now, from this comparison of the food of angels with bread and with the manna, it was easy for His disciples to understand that, just as the body is daily nourished with bread, and as the Jews were daily nourished with manna in the desert, so the Christian soul can partake of this heavenly bread daily and be refreshed thereby. Moreover, from the fact that in the Lord's Prayer, we are bidden to ask for *our daily bread*, the holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that we must understand not so much that material bread which is the support of the body, as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food.

The principal ob-
ject of daily
Communion.

Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet aims at this particular result, that the faithful, being united to God by means of

the sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, wash away their daily failings, and avoid these graver sins to which human frailty is liable—its primary purpose, then, is not to consider the honour and reverence due to our Lord nor to serve as a prize or reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients.³ Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins."⁴

Communion during
the first centu-
ries.

Thoroughly grasping the spirit of this desire on the part of God, the first Christians daily flocked to the holy table of life and strength. *They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in*

¹ Sess. XXII, cap. vi. ² John vi. 59. ³ St. Augustine, Serm. 57 in Matth., de Orat. Dom., n. 7. ⁴ Sess. XIII, cap. ii.

*the communication of the breaking of bread.*¹ And that this practice was continued during later ages, not without great fruit of sanctity and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness.

Discussions as to the dispositions requisite for daily Communion.

But when piety had grown cold, and more especially later on when the influence of the plague of Jansenism was spread far and wide, disputes arose concerning the dispositions necessary for frequent or daily Communion, and the disputants vied with one another in demanding as necessary more and more stringent conditions. The result of such disputes was that very few were considered worthy to receive the Blessed Eucharist daily and to derive from this most healing sacrament its more abundant fruits; the rest being content to partake of it once a year, or once a month, or at the utmost weekly. Nay, to such a pitch was rigorism carried, that whole classes of persons were excluded from frequent Communion; for instance, those engaged in trade, or those living in the state of matrimony.

Others, however, went to the opposite extreme. Under the persuasion that daily Communion was commanded by divine precept, and in order that no day might pass without Communion, they held, along with other practices contrary to the approved usage of the Church, that the Holy Eucharist ought to be received, and in fact they actually administered it, even on Good Friday.

Decrees of the Holy See.

The Holy See did not fail to discharge its duty. By a decree of this Sacred Congregation, which begins with the words *Cum ad aures*, issued on the 12th February, A.D. 1679, with the approbation of Innocent VI, it condemned these errors, and put a stop to such abuses; at the same time declaring that all the faithful of whatsoever class, merchants or married persons not excepted, might be admitted to frequent Communion, according to the devotion of each one and the judgment of his confessor. And on the 7th December, 1690, by the decree *Sanctissimus Dominus*, of Pope Alexander VIII, the proposition of Baius, demanding of those who wished to approach the holy table a perfectly pure love of God without any admixture of defect, was condemned.

The leaven of Jansenism still remained.

Yet the poison of Jansenism, which, under the pretext of the honour and reverence due to the Holy Eucharist, had infected the minds even of good men, did not entirely disappear. The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for right and lawful frequentation of Communion survived the declarations of the Holy See; so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the faithful only in rare cases, and under many conditions.

The traditional doctrine on the subject.

On the other hand, there were not wanting men of learning and piety, who allowed a more ready access to this practice which is so salutary and so pleasing to God, and who, in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers, maintained that there was no precept

¹ Acts ii. 42.

of the Church demanding more perfect dispositions in the case of daily than of weekly or monthly Communion; and that the effects of daily Communion would be far more abundant than those of Communion received weekly or monthly.

Recent controversy. In our own day the controversy has been multiplied, and not without bitterness, so that the minds of confessors and the consciences of the faithful have been disturbed, to the no small detriment of Christian piety and devotion. Accordingly, certain distinguished personages and pastors of souls, have urgently besought His Holiness Pope Pius X to deign to settle, by his supreme authority, the question concerning the dispositions requisite for daily Communion, in order that this usage, which is so salutary and so pleasing to God, might not only suffer no further decrease among the faithful, but might rather be promoted and everywhere propagated—especially in times like these when religion and the Catholic faith are attacked on all sides, and the true love of God and genuine piety are found lacking in no small degree. And His Holiness, being most earnestly desirous out of his abundant solicitude and zeal, that the faithful should be invited to the sacred banquet and should avail themselves of its immense fruits as often as possible, and even daily, committed the aforesaid question to this Sacred Congregation, to be looked into and decided once for all.

Decision of the Sacred Congregation. Accordingly, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a plenary Session held on the 16th December, 1905, submitted the whole matter to a very careful scrutiny; and, after sedulously considering the reasons adduced on either side, determined and declared as follows:—

1. Frequent and daily Communion, being most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, shall be accessible to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the holy table with a right and devout intention, can be hindered therefrom.

2. Now, the right intention consists in this, that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vain glory, or human respect, but to please God, be more closely united with Him by charity, and avail himself of this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is most expedient that those who receive Communion frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, at least such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the resolution of never sinning any more; and, if they have this sincere resolution it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves from even venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, while taking effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better;

therefore, care is to be taken that serious preparation should precede Holy Communion, and that a suitable thanksgiving according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties, should follow.

5. In order that frequent and daily Communion may be practised with greater prudence and may be accompanied by more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace, and approaches with a right intention.

6. But since it is plain that, by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist, union with Christ is increased, the spiritual life more abundantly fostered, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and a still surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers should—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism¹—frequently, and with great zeal, exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion shall be promoted especially in religious institutions of all kinds; with regard to which, however, the decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on the 17th December, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be especially promoted in ecclesiastical seminaries, the students of which aspire to the service of the altar; as also in all Christian educational establishments of whatever kind.

8. In the case of religious institutes, whether of solemn or simple vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars, Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as *directive* and not *preceptive*. The appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum for the devotion of the religious. Therefore, more frequent, or even daily access to the Eucharistic table must always be allowed them, according to the principles above laid down in this decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may properly understand the provisions of this decree, the Superior of each house shall see that it is read in community, in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this decree, all ecclesiastical writers shall cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions requisite for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness Pope Pius X by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, in an audience held on the 17th December, 1905, His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present decree, and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all bishops and regular prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes,

¹ Part ii., n. 60.

and priests ; and that in their reports on the state of their respective dioceses or institutes, they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.

✠ VINCENT, Card., *Bishop of Palestrina, Prefect.*

CAJETAN DE LAI, *Secretary.*

DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF INDULGENCES

Dispensing daily Communicants from the weekly Confession heretofore necessary for the gaining of Indulgences

His Holiness Pope Pius X most earnestly desires that the praiseworthy custom, so very acceptable to God, by which the faithful approach daily to Holy Communion, in a state of grace and with a right intention, should become more general and lead to more virtuous lives. For which reason, graciously and gladly receiving the many petitions addressed to him through the Most Eminent Cardinal Casimir Gennari, he has determined to grant a special favour to all those who follow or desire to follow the practice aforesaid.

Now Pope Clement XIII, of happy memory, by a decree of this Sacred Congregation of the 9th day of December, 1763, granted to all the faithful, "who, striving to purify their souls by frequent confession of their sins, were accustomed, when not legitimately hindered, to approach the sacrament of Penance at least once a week, and who were not conscious of having committed any mortal sin since their last confession, the privilege of gaining all indulgences whatsoever, without the actual confession which otherwise would be necessary for gaining them : this concession, however, being in no wise applicable to the indulgences of a jubilee, whether ordinary or extraordinary, or to other indulgences of a similar character, for the gaining of which, besides the other works enjoined, sacramental confession must be made within the time prescribed."

Now, however, to all the faithful who, being in the state of grace, are accustomed to receive the Blessed Eucharist daily with a right and devout intention, even though they omit their daily Communion once or twice in the week, our Most Holy Father Pius X grants that they may avail themselves of the Indult of Clement XIII, of happy memory, without being obliged to make the weekly confession which would otherwise be still necessary for the gaining of the indulgences that occur during the week. His Holiness, moreover, has graciously declared that this favour shall hold good for future times. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, the 14th day of February, 1906.

A. Card. TRIPEPI, *Prefect.*

✠ D. PANICI, *Archbishop of Laodicea, Secretary.*

THE BLESSED EUCHARIST—(*continued*)2. THE INSTITUTION AND EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE
EUCHARIST

Q. When did Jesus Christ institute the sacrament of the Eucharist ?

A. Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist at the last supper, which He took with His disciples, the evening before His passion.

Q. Why did Jesus Christ institute the Most Holy Eucharist ?

A. Jesus Christ instituted the Most Holy Eucharist for three principal reasons :—

1. To be the Sacrifice of the New Law ;
2. To be the food of our souls ;
3. To be a perpetual memorial of His passion and death and a precious pledge both of His love for us and of eternal life.

Q. Why did Jesus Christ institute this sacrament under the appearances of bread and wine ?

A. Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament under the appearances of bread and wine, because the Eucharist, being intended to be our spiritual nourishment, it was therefore fitting that it should be

given to us under the form of food and drink.

Q. What are the effects which the Most Holy Eucharist produces in us ?

A. The principal effects which the Most Holy Eucharist produces in those who worthily receive it are these : (1) It preserves and increases the life of the soul, which is grace, just as natural food sustains and increases the life of the body ; (2) It remits venial sins and preserves us from mortal sin ; (3) It produces spiritual consolation.

Q. Does not the Most Holy Eucharist produce other effects in us ?

A. Yes ; the Most Holy Eucharist produces three other effects in us : (1) It weakens our passions, and in particular it allays in us the fires of concupiscence ; (2) It increases in us the fervour of charity towards God and our neighbour, and aids us to act in conformity with the will of Jesus Christ ; (3) It gives us a pledge of future glory and of the resurrection of our body.

3. THE DISPOSITIONS NECESSARY TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION
WORTHILY

Q. Does the sacrament of the Eucharist always produce its marvellous effects in us ?

A. The sacrament of the Eucharist produces its marvellous effects in us when it is received with the requisite dispositions.

Q. What conditions are necessary to make a good Communion ?

A. To make a good Communion three conditions are necessary : (1) To be in the grace of God ; (2) To be fasting from midnight until the moment of Holy Communion ;

(3) To know what we are about to receive, and to approach Holy Communion devoutly.

Q. What is meant by being in the grace of God ?

A. To be in the grace of God means to have a pure conscience and to be free from every mortal sin.

Q. What should one who knows that he is in mortal sin do before receiving Communion ?

A. One who knows that he is in mortal sin must make a good confession before going to Holy Communion, for even an act of perfect contrition is not enough without confession to enable one who is in mortal sin to receive Holy Communion properly.

Q. Why does not even an act of perfect contrition suffice to enable one who knows he is in mortal sin to go to Communion ?

A. Because the Church, out of respect for this sacrament, has ordained that no one in mortal sin should dare to go to Communion without first going to confession ?

Q. Does he who goes to Communion in mortal sin receive Jesus Christ ?

A. He who goes to Communion in mortal sin receives Jesus Christ but not His grace ; moreover, he commits a sacrilege and renders himself deserving of sentence of damnation.

Q. What sort of fast is required before Communion ?

A. Before Communion there is required a natural fast which is broken by taking the least thing by way of food or drink.

Q. If one were to swallow a particle that had remained between the teeth, or a drop of water while washing, might he still go to Communion ?

A. If one were to swallow a particle that had remained between the teeth, or a drop of water while washing, he might still go to Communion, because in both cases these things would either not be taken as food or drink, or they would have already lost the nature of either.

Q. Is it ever allowed to go to Communion after having broken the fast ?

A. To go to Communion after having broken the fast is permitted to the sick, who are in danger of death, and to those who on account of prolonged illness have received a special dispensation from the Pope. Communion given to the sick in danger of death is called *Viaticum*, because it supports them on their way from this life to eternity.

Q. What is meant by the words : To know what we are about to receive ?

A. To know what we are about to receive means to know and firmly believe what is taught in Christian doctrine concerning this sacrament.

Q. What do the words : To receive Holy Communion with devotion mean ?

A. To receive Holy Communion with devotion means to approach Holy Communion with humility and modesty in person and dress ; and to make a preparation before, and an act of thanksgiving after, Holy Communion.

Q. In what does the preparation before Communion consist ?

A. Preparation before Communion consists in meditating for some time on Whom we are about to receive, and on who we are ; and in making acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, adoration, humility, and desire to receive Jesus Christ.

Q. In what does the thanksgiving after Communion consist ?

A. Thanksgiving after Communion consists in keeping ourselves recollected in order to honour the Lord who is within us ; renewing our acts of faith, of hope, of charity, of adoration, of thanksgiving, of offerings, and of requests, especially for those graces which are most necessary for ourselves and for those for whom we are bound to pray.

Q. What should we do during the day on which we have received Communion ?

A. During the day on which we have received Communion, we should remain as recollected as possible, occupy ourselves in works of piety, and discharge the duties of our state with greater diligence.

Q. How long does Jesus Christ abide within us after Holy Communion ?

A. After Holy Communion Jesus Christ abides within us by His grace as long as we commit no mortal sin ; and He abides within us by His Real Presence until the sacramental species are consumed.

4. THE WAY TO GO TO COMMUNION

Q. How should we act while receiving Holy Communion ?

A. In the act of receiving Holy Communion we should be kneeling, hold our head slightly raised, our eyes modest and fixed on the sacred Host, our mouth sufficiently open, and the tongue slightly out over the lips.

Q. How should the Communion-cloth be held ?

A. The Communion-cloth should be held in such a way as to receive the sacred Host in case it should fall.

Q. When should the sacred Host be swallowed ?

A. We should try to swallow the sacred Host as soon as possible, and we should avoid spitting for some time.

Q. If the sacred Host should cling to the palate what should be done ?

A. If the sacred Host should cling to the palate it should be removed with the tongue, but never with the finger.

5. THE PRECEPT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Q. When are we bound to receive Communion ?

A. We are bound to go to Communion once a year, at Easter, each one in his own parish ; and also when in danger of death.

Q. At what age does the precept of paschal Communion begin to bind ?

A. The precept of paschal Communion begins to bind as soon as a child is capable of receiving with the requisite dispositions.

Q. Do they sin who are old enough to receive Communion and do not ?

A. They who are old enough to receive Communion and do not

either because they are unwilling, or because through their own fault they are not instructed, undoubtedly sin. Their parents or guardians also sin if the delay of Communion is owing to their fault, and they shall have to render a strict account to God for it.

Q. Is it a good and useful thing to go often to Communion?

A. It is an excellent thing to go

to Communion often, and even daily in accordance with the desire of the Church, provided we do so with the requisite dispositions.

Q. How often may we go to Holy Communion?

A. We may go to Holy Communion as often as we are advised to do so by a pious and learned confessor.

Ninth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE GREAT GOODNESS OF GOD IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

IF the Eucharist is, as we have already seen, *a mystery of faith, par excellence*, on account of the prodigies and miracles it contains, it is also the greatest excess of divine love for us, and hence the Fathers have called it the sacrament of Love.

Of all the gifts of God there is none in which His divine goodness and love are so resplendent as in this, and that for two reasons which, to animate your devotion, I now propose to discuss—the first arises from the nature of the sacrament; the second from the ends for which Jesus Christ instituted it.

As for the first point, when I say *the nature of this sacrament* I mean three things: The quality of the gift bestowed on us; the circumstance of the time in which it was given us; and, finally, the wonderful and ineffable manner selected by divine wisdom to impart it.

1. *The quality of the gift.* Let it suffice to say that God gives us His whole Self—His body, His blood, His soul, His divinity—and hence we may at once say, with St. Augustine, that nothing more noble, nothing more great, nothing more precious, nothing more expressive of His love for us could the Lord have given us, all wise, all rich, all powerful though He is. And in truth, what more remains for Him to give, after having given us Himself? No; the Church has no dearer pledge, no greater treasure than this sacrament in which is contained the Humanity and Divinity of Jesus Christ, and, along with Him, a perennial, inexhaustible fountain of all graces and blessings.

2. But the love of God for us appears in still greater relief from the *circumstances of the time* in which this gift was given us. Had Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist at the time when the people ran in crowds after Him, carried away by His teaching, His virtues, His miracles; when they desired to make Him king in the desert; and when they received Him with transports of joy in Jerusalem, proclaiming Him to be the Son of David, and the true Messiah blessed by the Lord,—such excess of goodness should even then cause us to wonder at His having willed to repay with a gift such as this the

homage and honours that were all too far below His infinite merits. But how much more should we be astonished at the thought that to give us this proof of His love He selected that very time when His death was being plotted—the very eve of His passion—nay, the very hour in which He was being betrayed by His traitorous Apostle? And what does this signify? It signifies that the love of Jesus Christ for us had greater influence over Him than all the malice of those who were plotting against Him—nay, influenced Him even in spite of that torrent of iniquity, profanation, outrage, and sacrilege, to which He well foresaw He was to be exposed in this sacrament.

3. Finally, if we reflect on *the manner in which He instituted this sacrament*, who cannot see that in order to institute it He had to raise Himself by many prodigies above all the laws of nature—diminish His sovereign grandeur, eclipse His infinite majesty, and hide His glory under the veil of a few obscure accidents? If, as St. Paul says, the Incarnation was a mystery of extreme humiliation, nay, even annihilation—because in it He hid His Divinity under the veil of our flesh: *He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant*¹—what shall we say of a mystery in which He hides His Humanity as well as His Divinity under the symbols of bread and wine? Are not the words, *He emptied Himself*, verified still more here? If it was annihilation for Him to have taken the form of a servant, that is of man, is it not much more so to have taken the form of material food and drink?

A gift such as this exceeds every demonstration of love. Think, reflect, as much as you will, and it is impossible for any mind, either of men or angels, to find a heart so dear, so lovable, so loving. Hence rightly has St. John the Evangelist, speaking of this mystery, said that although Jesus Christ during the whole course of His life had ever given us signal marks of His love, yet He gave us still more tender and signal proofs of it at the end of His life: *Having loved His own who were in the world He loved them to the end*.² In that hour it was that the near approach of the moment in which He was to leave us stirred His heart with such intense affection for us and moved Him so deeply in our regard, as to lead Him to this unlooked for invention of love. Then, indeed, as the Church exclaims, He exhausted the very riches of His love for us.

For the sake of greater clearness, and for your better instruction, let us consider the different ends for which Jesus Christ willed to institute this sacrament and give us His very Self—we shall thus be able to understand the corresponding obligations we are under to Him.

¹ Phil. ii. 7.

² John xiii. 1.

His principal ends were three : to be our companion, to be our food, and to be our victim. Our companion in the tabernacle wherein He permanently resides ; our food at the Eucharistic banquet ; our victim in the daily Sacrifice on our altars.

1. *To be the companion of our life.* When He had disclosed to His disciples that He was about to leave them and return to the Father, He softened the bitterness of that announcement by promising that He would not leave them orphans ;¹ that though He was about to deprive them of His visible presence, yet He would, in another way, remain with them, even to the end of the world. Now, what He promised them, He promised us—a promise fulfilled by Him each day in the sacrament of our altars.

And on these altars, Jesus Christ, hidden under the sacramental species, but at the same time ever glorious in His essence, almighty, eternal, and magnificent, such as He actually is at the right hand of His heavenly Father, continually dwells amongst us to welcome us close at hand, lend a ready ear to our supplications, and leave nothing unheard that can be for our good. Here He enables us unceasingly to enjoy His presence, admits us at all hours to His audience, to enable us to visit Him and speak familiarly with Him. *Behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the world*²—from His tabernacle, from that consecrated Host, He repeats to us what He said to His disciples : “ Behold I am with you not merely for a day, or a month, or a year, but for all time, to the very end of the world. Though I shall have ascended into heaven, do not imagine you have lost Me—I, your Father, your Redeemer, your God,—I, in person, remain here to be your refuge in all your necessities ; that which you here adore is My true, living body ; behold I am with you even to the consummation of the world.” Oh, how privileged the people of God to have their God so near them, a member of their household, their familiar friend. To this loving end, we should correspond by frequent and devout visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

First of all, gratitude demands this ; for if Jesus loves us so far as to be always with us and in our midst, if He even proclaims in sacred Scripture that this is His dearest wish, His greatest delight : *My delight is to be with the children of men*, is it not a most just, a most sacred, and a most inviolate duty for us to spend as much time as we can near Him, know Him, and show Him respect by our visits ? What horrible ingratitude it would be to neglect Him, and live forgetful of Him ? How monstrous it is in us that He is more anxious about us than we about Him ?

¹ John xiv. 18.

² Matt. xxviii. 20.

Next, our own interest demands this. The presence of Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Sacrament, is of infinite advantage to us. He is seated there on His throne of love, of goodness, of grace, and the very miracles which He visibly wrought in this world, when travelling up and down Palestine, He still accomplishes invisibly in this divine sacrament. And hence at the feet of Jesus we should seek for the remedy for our troubles, comfort in our afflictions, contrition for our faults, victory over our evil inclinations, strength against temptation, increase of faith, hope, and charity—a single visit, well made, is often sufficient for Him to straightway change the disposition of our hearts.

From this it will be readily seen that this should be one of our specially favourite devotions, being as it is the solidest in itself, the most conformable to the designs of Jesus Christ, and at the same time the most salutary and advantageous for us. We may sometimes imagine what a happiness it was for St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalen, and the first disciples, to be able to speak with Jesus Christ when visible on earth. But is it not the same Jesus whom we possess truly and really present on our altars, even though He is veiled and invisible? The fact of His having veiled His majesty, instead of diminishing the greatness of the gift, rather increases it; for were He to show Himself to us, as He really is, surrounded by glory, not alone should we not have the great advantage derived from the merit of our faith, but not one of us would, for very fear and reverence, dare to draw near to Him. And, moreover, do we not know from the Gospel, that when He willed to make the three Apostles, Peter, James, and John, witnesses of His glorious transfiguration on Thabor, they were so overwhelmed with the dazzling splendours of His Divinity that they fell prostrate and terrified to the ground: *They fell upon their face, and were very much afraid.*¹ The fact, then, that Jesus Christ has made Himself invisible is an act of the greatest kindness and love, since it renders access to Him more easy and more confident.

How much better would it be, if, instead of so many useless, idle, and sometimes even sinful visits to various people, we were to draw near the feet of Jesus, and open out our hearts before Him? How inconsistent it sounds that we can find time for so much visiting—that the streets, the parks, the places of public amusement are frequented by crowds of people of all sorts and conditions, while Jesus Christ very often remains alone and deserted on the altar! What indignity! What ingratitude! And yet His love for us does not even stop at this.

2. The second and yet more admirable end for which Jesus Christ

¹ Matt. xvii. 6.

gave Himself to us in this divine sacrament was to be our food in Holy Communion.

If He had no other end in view than to establish His dwelling-place in our midst, console us by His presence, receive our homage, listen to our requests, and impart to us His personal benediction, this would indeed have been a trait of goodness beyond compare. But He has not thus limited Himself. His boundless love led Him to be enclosed in the sacred Host, to be placed on our tongue, descend into our breast, become incorporated with us, and unite us to Himself in the closest bonds of union.

His constant presence and nearness was not enough for Him—He further desired intimate union and almost identity of Himself with us, as He has declared in these words: *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him.*¹

There is nothing in the world that is more intimately united to us, and becomes more ours than the food that sustains us. By the agency of nature, it is converted into our substance in such a way as to become the self-same thing as we—one single flesh, one only person. In like manner Jesus Christ, by means of the Eucharistic food, unites Himself to us in such a way that as He Himself says, He abides in us and we in Him: *He who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in Him.* There is no difference between the other foods and this except that they are changed into us and become our substance, while this changes us into itself. "Thou shalt not change Me into thee, but thou shalt be changed into Me." This change is not a change of our substance into that of Jesus Christ who is incorruptible and immortal, but of our spirit into that of Jesus Christ who by His flesh communicates His sovereign virtues to us to enable us to live a divine life: *He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.*²

Was there ever so great a prodigy of love and charity? Who could have imagined anything like it? A God becoming the food of man, uniting Himself to them, becoming one with them! And that not merely once, but over and over again, without limit or restriction—and not only permitting it, but commanding it under the grave threat of being excluded from eternal life: *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you.*³

How, then, should we respond to this most loving Saviour, who, spontaneously and with such abounding charity, has deigned to give Himself to us as our food? Assuredly should we be inflamed

¹ John vi. 57.

² John vi. 58.

³ John vi. 54.

with a holy ambition, a holy eagerness to approach this heavenly table frequently, and to live in such a way as to be always disposed to receive, even daily, this divine bread which daily comes down from heaven for our sakes : *This is the bread come down from heaven.* But alas, how often does He meet with nothing but distaste, or coldness, or carelessness, or contempt !

The majority of men resemble the ungrateful persons referred to in the Gospel parable. These were invited to a great supper, and who could believe but that they would at once accept the invitation ? Yet there was not even one to accept it—all excused themselves on one pretext or another—*And they began all at once to make excuse.*¹ Not otherwise does it happen in the case of many Catholics. This great supper was a figure of the Eucharistic banquet—that great and divine supper served with the bread of angels—with the flesh of a God made man ; and to this supper Jesus Christ Himself earnestly invites us : *Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.*² Yet, notwithstanding all this, numbers of Catholics, some through sloth, some through love of sin, some through over-anxiety about worldly affairs, remain aloof—the precept and threats of the Church are necessary to compel them ; and if it was not for a tincture of human respect, they would not be induced to approach even at Easter. Here, then, we have another and still more monstrous example of unthankfulness and ingratitude to the infinite love of Jesus.

3. But there is yet a third excess of love. Jesus Christ left us Himself in this divine sacrament, not only to be our companion, and our food, but also as a victim and as a true Sacrifice in the holy Mass—a Sacrifice which would be a perpetual memorial of the sacrifice of the Cross, and would renew it in a real though mystic manner, and apply its fruits to souls unceasingly. Hence to institute this sacrament, He selected the *night in which He was betrayed* into the hands of His enemies ; hence, too, in giving His body and blood to His disciples, He reminded them that it was the self-same body, and the self-same blood that was soon to be immolated and poured forth on the altar of the Cross : *This is the body which shall be given for you—this is the blood which shall be poured forth for you ;* and hence also, in that very moment in which He ordained them priests of the New Testament He commanded them to renew His passion by the celebration of the Sacrifice : *Do this, in commemoration of Me—as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord.*³

¹ Luke xiv. 18.² Cant. v. 1.³ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

Not content, then, with the bloody Sacrifice which was to be consummated the next day on Calvary, He found in the institution of this sacrament a means of perpetuating it in a mystic manner on our altars, and of unceasingly offering Himself in person to His divine Father, being Himself both priest and victim at one and the same time ; thus giving us in this holy oblation of infinite value, which is repeated every day, a copious and inexhaustible fountain of gifts and graces, rendering us capable of suitably discharging all our duties towards God, and of fully providing for all our needs, as will be explained at greater length when we come to speak of the fruits of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

How great, then, should be our anxiety and care to be present as often as possible at this precious and most august oblation of Himself offered to the Eternal Father, by His only-begotten Son, under the lowly appearances of bread and wine, and in a state of death that vividly represents His past condition on the Cross—an oblation which transports all heaven into admiration and ecstasy—an oblation the dearest and most acceptable to the Lord, and hence the most effectual in drawing down on us His divine benedictions. Assuredly, had we faith as large as a grain of mustard seed, we should not allow a single day to pass without hearing Mass ; but how few there are who recognize its value and derive profit from it—who show themselves anxious to assist at it when not compelled by the precept of the Church—who, in fine, are grateful and thankful for the love shown by Jesus Christ in this sacrament ! Well, the conclusion of all this is that Jesus Christ assuredly is not wanting on His part, but that His designs are frustrated by us. All the blame is ours if He is unable to accomplish the good that His loving Heart desires—if we are miserable it is because we wish to be so.

Such, then, are the principal ends Jesus Christ had in view in the institution of the Eucharist, and from these it will be evident that the greatest miracle to be admired in it is, as St. Thomas remarks, the excess of divine love—"the greatest of the miracles of Christ." How can the substance of bread and wine be changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ ?—how can the real body of Christ exist within the narrow compass of a Host ? To these questions the answer is easy : because God can do all things, because nothing is impossible to Him. But that God should love weak and contemptible creatures such as us, with such intensity and transport, as to give Himself all to us in the Eucharist, to be our food, our companion, our abiding victim—this indeed is something to fill us with wonder and amazement—this indeed is something for which we can assign no reason.

Well, in the three ends already enumerated you have the three distinct ways in which Jesus Christ renders Himself the special object of our devotion : by remaining hidden in the tabernacle or by being exposed for public adoration ; by uniting Himself to us in Holy Communion ; and by offering Himself for us in the unbloody Sacrifice of our altars—three titles, whence arise grave and special obligations on our part.

Grateful, then, for the great gift which God has conferred on us in instituting this divine sacrament, let us use the advantage derived from the possession of it, by honouring it in every way, both by devout and frequent visits to the tabernacle, and by devout and frequent participation at the Eucharistic table, and by devout and frequent assistance at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It will never be possible for our worship, love, and devotion towards Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament to grow less, if we only bear in mind, as indeed we should never fail to do, that the very Jesus who has become our companion, our food, and our victim during life has also willed to be our *Viaticum* at life's close ; that He will approach our death-bed to accompany us in the great and inevitable journey from this life to the life to come. Well, shall He then come to us as our Father and Saviour, mindful of the devotion we have shown towards Him, and ready to repay us by sustaining and strengthening us amidst the dreadful straits of body and soul ? or shall He come as Judge to punish our coldness, our carelessness, and our indifference towards Him, and make us feel in anticipation the condemnation that awaits us ? What am I to reply for you, and what for myself ? Just this : From the treatment we now manifest towards Him we can, with all probability, deduce the treatment we shall receive from Him then. Let us, then, think well on it, let us take precautions now while the time remains propitious and favourable to us ; and let us always remember that He has no need of our homage, while we on the contrary stand in continual need of Him, both in life and especially at the critical hour of death.

Tenth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE EFFECTS OF HOLY COMMUNION

HAVING already explained the various loving ends on account of which Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, I now come to speak of it as the food of the soul in sacramental Communion, in reference to which we have three things to consider—the effects it produces in us ; the dispositions with which it should be received ; and the importance of communicating frequently.

And first as to the wonderful effects which Holy Communion produces in the soul that is properly prepared and disposed for its reception—as the Eucharist surpasses all the other sacraments in excellence and dignity, so also does it surpass them in virtue and efficacy. Hence the Church cries out in astonishment, using the beautiful words of St. Ambrose : “ O sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion renewed, the soul filled with grace, and a pledge of the life to come given us.”

Examining the subject in detail and with greater precision we see there are two principal effects of this sacrament—the one general and common to all the *sacraments of the Living* ; the other peculiar to and characteristic of this sacrament.

1. Its first effect is to increase sanctifying grace in us ; but the increase of grace produced by the Eucharist is, owing to the nature of this sacrament, far greater than that produced by the other sacraments. In fact the other sacraments are nothing more than channels by which the saving waters of grace are communicated to us, while in this sacrament we have the very source of grace ; the other sacraments operate by a virtue given them by Jesus Christ, but here it is Jesus Christ Himself who operates in person, feeds us, so to say, with His own very substance, lives and abides within us with all the treasures of His graces, and all the merits of His satisfaction, ever ready and willing to bestow them more and more profusely. As long as we voluntarily place no obstacle in the way of the infinite goodness and charity of a God who makes Himself our guest, such and so great is the increase of grace produced by this sacrament that in the words of the Church it may be called superabundance and fullness of grace ; “ the soul is filled with grace”—

grace of light to the intellect, of charity to the heart, of strength to the will, of comfort and sweetness and joy to the spirit.

2. But it is impossible to speak of the general effect of the Eucharist without touching on its special and characteristic effect which is to nourish our souls. The special, specific, grace of this sacrament by which it is distinguished from all the other sacraments is, in fact, a grace of spiritual nutriment. Hence it is that Jesus Christ instituted it under the symbols of bread and wine—He even gives it the name of bread, of true food, of bread of life: *I am the bread of life*;¹ *My flesh is truly meat, My blood is truly drink*;² *I am the living bread*³—thus denoting that He is the heavenly food of our souls, just as bread is the food of the body, and that the same effects as are produced in the body by material bread are produced in the soul by the Eucharistic bread. Let us compare them.

The first effect of food—an effect from which all the rest depend—is to be intimately united to us and become one single thing with us. It not alone enters the stomach, but it becomes diffused through all the parts of the body—penetrates into flesh, and bone, and sinew, and becomes so much a part of our substance that it is no longer possible to separate the one from the other. Now, it is thus that Jesus Christ unites Himself corporeally and substantially to us in the Eucharist, so much so that we become one body and one soul with Him: *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him*. Now, what is the result of this intimate and substantial union of Christ with us? The self-same effect as that produced in the body by material food which, as we know, maintains and sustains our life, which otherwise could not exist; invigorates, strengthens, and conducts it to perfect maturity. Not otherwise does the Eucharistic food maintain the soul's life which is grace; gives us vigour and strength; and raises us unceasingly to higher and higher degrees of holiness and perfection.

I have said that *it maintains the life of the soul*, in the same way as material bread maintains that of the body. There is, however, this difference, that the body, no matter how much it may be nourished, must one day lose its life; while the soul if it only eats worthily of this heavenly bread never loses its life, as Jesus Christ has assured us: *I am the living bread come down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever*⁴—words that cannot be applied to our temporal death, which is inevitable in the present order of things, and hence they can only be taken to refer to spiritual death, against which this sacrament has the power of preserving us permanently.

¹ John vi. 48.

² John vi. 56.

³ John vi. 51.

⁴ John vi. 51.

I say *permanently*, to denote the difference between the Eucharist and Confession, which also delivers us from death by transferring us from a state of sin to a state of grace. But the grace acquired by it, as St. Paul says, is a treasure which we carry in *earthen vessels*, and which cannot be long preserved unless we possess some other powerful succour against the many dangers that easily lead to its being lost. Now, this succour is afforded us by the Eucharist which supplies a remedy for our daily weaknesses, just as material bread repairs the daily loss of our bodily powers.

In what exactly do these weaknesses consist? In temptations by which we are assailed; in the passions which wage continual war against us; in the failings to which we are exposed—all of which enfeeble the soul and lead it imperceptibly to death.

Now, with regard to *temptations*, the Eucharist affords us wonderful strength to conquer them, and arms us against the devil and his suggestions. We rise from this table, says St. John Chrysostom, like lions breathing fire, made terrible to the very demons who tremble to see us bear within us as our defence Him who completely triumphed over them and destroyed their empire. At His presence they fly, as did the Philistines of old when they saw the Ark of the Lord borne into the battle-field by the Jews: We are lost, they cried out in terror, behold the God of Israel coming to the succour of His people! This is also that table which the Psalmist says God keeps prepared against all those who afflict us: *Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me.*¹ And therefore it is that the Church in times of persecution was so careful to arm the faithful with it, while they, strengthened by that divine food, unflinchingly mounted the scaffold to lay down their lives for the faith of Jesus Christ.

As for the *passions*, the second reason of our sins, if the Eucharist does not completely rid us of them, it at least moderates their violence and represses their unregulated inclinations. Hence St. Bernard said to the faithful of his day: If any one among you feels that the motions of anger, envy, and incontinence are no longer so strong as they were within you, let him simply attribute it to the body and blood of Jesus Christ received in Holy Communion. The passion of sense particularly, which of all the passions is the most violent and dangerous, finds a stern restraint in this sacrament which is specially ordained to heal that deadly plague called concupiscence and diminish its fires. The immaculate flesh of Jesus Christ communicates its own qualities to our flesh; the blood of Jesus purifies ours which is defiled

¹ Ps. xxii. 5.

and corrupt through sin. Hence the Eucharist is called the *corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins*,¹ because it gives us a distaste for sensual pleasures and enables us to live an angelic life in the body just as if we were spirits without a body.

Finally, Communion directly cleanses us of our *daily faults*. By these I do not mean serious sins which are wiped away only in the sacrament of Penance, and which are never cancelled by the Eucharist, except accidentally; but I mean the lesser failings into which we daily fall. Regarding these, the Council of Trent assures us that this divine sacrament possesses the power to blot them out, if we receive it with hearts detached from affection to them—"It is the antidote by which we are freed from our daily faults."

It is thus, then, that the Eucharist preserves spiritual life in us, warding off and diminishing all that tends towards its destruction. Temptations become less frequent and more feeble; passions less active and more mortified; with less proclivity and propensity to evil. Justly, then, does the Council of Trent call it a great preservative from serious faults—"An antidote by which we are freed from daily failings, and preserved from mortal sins." But this is far from being all.

As material food not only maintains the life of the body, but invigorates and strengthens us and brings us to requisite perfection, so does the Eucharistic bread not only preserve us from the death of the soul, but makes us grow from virtue to virtue, from merit to merit, from holiness to holiness; and hence it was prefigured in that mysterious bread which the angel gave to Elias in the desert, refreshed with which the Prophet became sensible of the presence of such unusual strength and vigour in his frame that he was able, without any other food, to walk for forty continuous days and nights to the summit of Mount Horeb—a lively image of the vigour which the Eucharist instils into us, enabling us to walk steadily in the ways of the Lord and arrive safely along the thorny road of our exile to the holy mount of God,—the heavenly kingdom—ever enlivening our faith, animating our hope, inflaming our charity.

And all this without stint or limit, far different from the food of our body, which once we have reached a certain stature can afford us no further increase; while this sacrament ever renders the soul susceptible of further progress, and is therefore called the food of the mature, because not only those who are beginning, not only those who are advancing, but also those who are already perfect in the spiritual life, unceasingly acquire new grades of holiness and perfection by means of the Eucharist.

Furthermore, so great is the virtue of this divine food that it raises us above ourselves, and from being men of earth, it makes us spiritual men and men of heaven. And in fact, why did Jesus Christ, by the institution of this sacrament, make us sharers in His flesh, His blood, His uncreated Divinity? His principal object was to make us participators of His divine spirit and by means of the sacramental union to contract a more perfect spiritual union with us; without which the former would be of no avail: *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.*¹ It was His design to transform us completely into Himself, not indeed by changing our substance into His, but by changing our spirit into His own. Such, then, in short, is the great, the greatest effect of the Eucharist—it soothes us, it imbues us, and fills us with the spirit of Jesus Christ—with His humility, His patience, His charity, with all His virtues; it enables us to live that same immaculate and divine life as He Himself lives: *He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me*;² hence he who communicates worthily can repeat with the Apostle: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me*,³ inasmuch as the spirit of Christ infused into us in the Eucharist becomes, so to say, the principle and the soul of all our thoughts, affections, inclinations, and operations.

What more can be said to express the efficacy and power of this divine sacrament? Yet all this is included in the statement that He is the real, substantial food of our souls; *My flesh is truly food*. And to make the comparison between bread and bread as perfect as possible, I add that as material food possesses along with its other qualities that of gladdening and pleasing the taste of the person who eats it, so also the Eucharist possesses the property of giving pleasure and sweetness to the soul, and infusing over it a celestial joy which is but a foretaste of Paradise: “Thou hast given them food from heaven, containing in itself every joy.”

Hence arise the raptures and ecstasies which we read of in the lives of the saints on the reception of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist; hence also that mysterious unction of heavenly sweetness experienced daily by pious souls who devoutly unite themselves to Him.

These graces, however, are matters of experience rather than of reasoning or discourse—they cannot be known by those who recognize no other pleasures than those of the flesh and the senses.

But all has not yet been said. The Eucharist extends its influence not only over the present life, but also over the life to come; not only over the soul, but also over the body; since we receive therein a pledge, an earnest, of our eternal happiness, according to the words used by

¹ John vi. 64.² John vi. 58.³ Gal. ii. 20.

the Church in praise of this divine sacrament : " A pledge of the glory to come is given us."

Now this glory to come comprises two things : the glory of the body in its resurrection, and the glory of the soul in the Beatific Vision—in the possession and loving enjoyment of God. That the Eucharist produces these two glories we know from the promise made by Jesus Christ : *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life ; and I will raise him up in the last day.*¹ *He hath everlasting life*—such is the glory of the soul, consisting in the Beatific Vision of God which we begin to possess under the veils of the Eucharist until such time as we are enabled to contemplate Him face to face in heaven. Moreover, being a sacrament of charity, love, and union with God, it gives us the right to a perfect union which cannot be consummated in this life but in the life to come—in our heavenly country : *And I shall raise him up in the last day*—such is the glory of the body in its resurrection.

Even though by God's decree the law that all should rise one day from the corruption of the tomb was not universal, still this distinct and special privilege would await those who during life had devoutly partaken of this heavenly food. For our mortal flesh, sanctified in the Eucharist by contact and union with the flesh of Christ who is life itself, receives into itself a seed of immortality, a vivifying bud, which should make it rise from the ashes of the tomb and clothe it with the glorious endowments of the body of Christ.

Hence the Eucharist has been called by the holy Fathers, *the symbol of the resurrection, the medicine of immortality*, and they compare it to the tree of life—that life-giving plant, placed by God in the earthly paradise to keep the years of our first parents ever green and fresh. We lost that tree ; but Jesus Christ has recompensed us to our great advantage by leaving us His body and blood to be the true food preserving us from spiritual and eternal death and making us bloom once more to a better immortality.

From all this it will be easy to infer what care and solicitude we should have to fortify ourselves with this sacrament, especially in that hour when our frame is threatened with dissolution, when the soul is surrounded and attacked by pressing dangers, when we are on the verge of losing that life that is so dear to us, and with that temporal life, our eternal life also. I refer, of course, to the case of grave illness and to the Blessed Eucharist received as the *Viaticum*.

Even if God and His Church had not commanded this under pain of damnation, would it not still be to our own special advantage to

¹ John vi. 55.

have Jesus Christ in person visit our bedside in that moment of bitterest anguish ? To Him alone can we look for alleviation of our pain, patience, fortitude, resignation, sometimes even bodily health ; for it not unfrequently happens that we see the health of the body revive along with that of the soul, and illness disappear at the sight of the heavenly Physician.

From Him, too, comes the strength to reject the temptations of the demons that are then more numerous than ever. The adversary is strong and the battle fierce, while we are weaker than ever ; but Jesus Christ, received in the Blessed Eucharist with the proper dispositions, becomes our shield and defence : *The Lord is my helper, and I will despise my enemies.*¹

From Him, finally, is derived final perseverance, of which the Eucharist cannot but be a pledge, precisely because it is a pledge of eternal life ; hence we pass from time to eternity carrying an earnest of Paradise in our breasts.

Such, beyond doubt, are the advantages of Holy Communion under the form of the *Viaticum*—it serves as a sure and certain guide on that great and final journey from this life to eternity.

How does it happen, then, that there is so often found such reluctance, and even alarm, in the sick at the bare mention of the Viaticum, as if it were a visit of evil omen ? The truth is, that this happens only in the case of those who, during life, have little affection for the sacraments. Not so good Catholics, who have been accustomed to receive the Blessed Sacrament frequently. At the first sign of serious illness they long for and request it anxiously ; they welcome it into their room with lively joy ; they receive it with tender devotion ; and, united with it, even in the midst of all their pains and agonies, they feel their hearts inundated with a flood of heavenly consolation—and thus they either are restored to health or, like victims already prepared, they await death, intrepid and assured : *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me.*²

Do we desire to be in the number of these fortunate souls ? Well, if so, like them, we must ever keep the eye of faith fixed on those things which must of necessity come one day ; we must often and fervently beseech Jesus Christ to make us worthy to receive Him in that last extremity ; and finally we must, from this very moment, even though compelled by no necessity of illness or death, show ourselves anxious and hungry for this divine food.

Such, then, are the priceless effects of the Eucharist—effects

¹ Ps. cxvii. 7.

² Ps. xxii. 4.

which do not cease to be such as I have said, and much more than I have said, even though frequently not realized in practice. But, you will ask, how is it possible to conciliate such wonderful efficacy and virtue with such sterility and scarceness of fruit as is generally observed in those who receive it?

In the first place, I reply that the effects of the sacrament are not always outwardly visible. What happens in the order of nature happens in the order of grace. Just as in the case of the body we grow in size imperceptibly and unconsciously, so is it in like manner with regard to the soul—one can grow, and often actually does grow, in grace, in fervour, in devotion, and in all the other Christian virtues without any signs of progress being manifested for some time. Let this be a comfort to those pious souls who, in the Blessed Eucharist, seek God with sincerity, and nevertheless seem to themselves to derive no fruit therefrom. Assuredly it is no small fruit to have habitually avoided all grave sin, fled all voluntary venial sin, and cherished the lowly sentiments they entertain about themselves.

But with regard to the greater part of Catholics, the fact that they do not feel any effects resulting from the Blessed Eucharist must be ascribed to the bad use they make of it, or their negligence in approaching it.

The bad use they make of it. If you communicate out of habit or custom, with little devotion and preparation, or with heart encumbered with vicious inclinations, what wonder should there be that you do not carry away even one drop of that saving virtue contained in the Blessed Eucharist? The fault is not in the food, but in the system—in your own bad dispositions.

I have also said *from negligence in approaching it*, because the salutary result of food is always in proportion to the use made of it. Let a food be ever so nutritious and substantial, its virtue surely does not last for ever. Does not food by its very nature demand that it should be frequently used? And if Jesus Christ is the food and nourishment of our souls, why do we stand aloof and allow weeks and months to pass, and merely bring ourselves to receive Him at Easter? How is it possible to experience sensibly and lastingly the effects of a food received thus rarely? But I shall take occasion to return to the importance of frequent Communion later on.

To conclude, let us approach frequently and with proper dispositions to the reception of this sacrament, shaking off as far as possible that lazy and senseless tepidity which is so common. Doing thus we shall find by experience how powerful is the virtue of the Eucharist to keep us from sin, heal the wounds of our souls, cherish piety, and establish and confirm us therein even more and more..

Eleventh Instruction on the Sacraments

DISPOSITIONS REQUISITE FOR HOLY COMMUNION

HAVING already explained what the Eucharist is, why it was instituted, and what are its effects, it is now necessary to speak of the dispositions with which it should be received. Before doing so, however, let us dwell for a moment on the obligation that binds us to receive this sacrament. It is not, indeed, necessary to salvation in the sense that it is absolutely necessary ; for children who die after Baptism are saved without Communion, and even adults can be saved if they die deprived of this sacrament through no fault of their own. *Through no fault of their own.* From this you will infer that the sacrament is necessary as a matter of precept—that is to say, a person who can receive it, but who neglects to do so, becomes under certain circumstances guilty of a grave sin.

This precept is clearly and formally laid down in the words of our Lord : *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you*¹—words involving a definite obligation, even though all the circumstances regarding the time in which we are to approach Holy Communion are not here particularized.

Writers on sacred subjects are all agreed that the divine law obliges us to receive the Blessed Eucharist when we are *in danger of death* ; if that precept ever holds assuredly is it in the time of our greatest need. Now, when is there such need as during the sorest straits both of soul and body ?—of the body, afflicted, languishing, oppressed by disease and pain ; of the soul, attacked on all sides, and torn by remorse, anguish, and terror. Both for one and for the other assuredly is there urgent need of a heavenly medicine, a sovereign relief ; and for this whither can we turn if not to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament ?

It is also agreed that as well as in danger of death the precept also binds us at various other times during the course of our lives. And how can we doubt it ? If Christ, as we have seen, instituted this sacrament as the food of our souls it is not really so if only very rarely availed of. The very nature and notion of food involves the need of frequent use thereof—a use readily availed of by good, fervent, and well-instructed Catholics, without any compulsion whatever.

¹ John vi. 54.

But since, as is shown by experience, this law would be disregarded by many were the determination of the time within which it should be obeyed left to each one's own free will, the Church has, on the basis of that law, determined the time, and has commanded that all the faithful as soon as they are capable of *discerning the body of the Lord* should communicate at least once a year, that is, at Easter. On this point we shall have more to say when we come to speak of the precepts of the Church.

Taking it for granted, then, that we are to communicate, whether in fulfilment of the precept, or through private devotion, the question arises as to what are the dispositions demanded in us? They are of two kinds—some regard the body, and others the soul; and of each of these two, some are indispensably necessary while others are simply right and becoming.

As to the dispositions of the body, we need not dwell on them at any length. Before communicating we must, in the first place, be fasting with that kind of fast which is known as *natural*—and which, unlike the *ecclesiastical* fast, is broken by the smallest particle of food. From midnight, then, up to the actual moment of Communion, nothing is to be swallowed by way of food or drink or medicine—such is the *natural fast*.

On this point, however, excessive scrupulosity should be avoided. According to the ordinary received teaching, neither the fragments of food that remain between the teeth, nor a drop of water which should accidentally be swallowed while washing the mouth or face, nor the blood that should issue from the teeth or gums or any other part of the mouth, would break the fast so far as to hinder Communion.

The fast is not, indeed, of divine precept, for we know that Jesus Christ administered Communion to the Apostles after they had eaten of the paschal lamb; but the Church demands it, and rightly so, as a mark of the honour and reverence due to the body of our Lord, which might otherwise be easily profaned in various ways if each one were allowed to eat and drink freely previous to Communion.

Nevertheless, the precept binds under pain of grave sin, and this legislation must date back almost to the times of the Apostles, since we find no trace of its origin in subsequent centuries, and hence it is so respected by the Church that it is not dispensed unless in the few cases in which it comes into contact with some more urgent precept; thus, for instance, if the Sacrifice of the Mass should happen to be interrupted by the sudden illness or death of the celebrant after the consecration, the Sacrifice in this case should be completed even by a priest who is not fasting, provided no priest

still fasting is available. The reason is that the integrity of the Sacrifice is prescribed by God.

In like manner, a person who is not fasting can communicate in case of grave and dangerous illness, because at such a time the obligation not to leave this life without being fortified with the succour that is derived from the Blessed Eucharist prevails over the obligation to receive Holy Communion fasting.

Besides fasting, there are certain other dispositions which while not so necessary are yet becoming. These are cleanliness, neatness, and general signs of exterior reverence and respect.

And, in fact, the reception of Holy Communion is a much more serious and important function than that of being presented before some great personage of this world, or before the most select assembly of men. Now the first and most elementary ideas of politeness and courtesy forbid us to appear before a great personage or a respectable assembly without being suitably attired, or in torn and wretched clothes, with dirty and unpolished boots, with hair dishevelled and unkempt, with soiled hands and face, or with a general air of levity, carelessness, and want of recollection. How, then, should we dare to present ourselves in a similar shape to receive Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament—an action which assuredly demands far more decorum, and signs of reverence and honour? Indeed, such cannot happen unless we completely lose sight of what we are about to do.

Were I speaking to a congregation of women, this would be the place to notice another kind of unbecoming behaviour of a far more serious character, and that is vanity and want of modesty. If immodesty is always blameworthy, even in the midst of the world, will it not be much more improper and ugly at the very table of the Lord? How can one dare to present oneself to receive Jesus Christ, all humbled as He is for us and hidden under the accidents of bread, with a display of pomp and mode of dress that outsteps the limits of modesty? What more repulsive or hateful object could there be in the sight of God than this?

It is enough for me to have drawn attention to this in order that the fathers and husbands here present will use the authority they possess to hinder any such unbecoming conduct in their wives and daughters. At the very least, on the occasion of Holy Communion let them cast aside the mania for appearance and display which is always attended with danger to decency and modesty.

So much for the dispositions of the body.

Now as to what is more important still, and that is the inward and immediate preparation of the soul. Yes, our principal care should be to strive to acquire those dispositions which go to render the soul a

worthy dwelling-place of our divine Guest, or to speak more correctly as little unworthy as possible. When we reflect that a lowly creature is going to receive his God, his Creator, the sovereign Lord of the universe, in whose hands is our lot both temporal and eternal ; that he is going to receive Him within himself, not merely in his own house, but into his heart—into the very innermost recess of his soul ; that he is going to receive Him, effecting thereby the closest and most ineffable union with Him ; when we think on all this, I repeat, can any preparation of ours ever seem excessive, or more than is demanded ? And if our preparation can never be in proportion to the infinite greatness of that God who descends into us, ought it not at the very least be all that is attainable by our powers assisted by divine grace ? God, indeed, well knows how to excuse the infirmity and weakness of our nature, but He will certainly not be indulgent towards the defects arising from culpable negligence.

What, then, should be that preparation ? It is not difficult to discover it. Jesus Christ deigned to institute the sacrament of the Eucharist under the appearances of bread and wine precisely in order that from the dispositions which are requisite to partake advantageously of food and drink, we should be able to infer the dispositions required in us for the worthy and profitable reception of this spiritual food.

Now, for material food to produce any effect, it is first of all necessary that the person to eat it be alive, since food has no power to give life to the dead, but only to preserve life in the living. In the second place, to produce its effects in all their fullness the person eating it must be in a satisfactory state of health, for otherwise even the most wholesome food becomes useless or even harmful.

Here, then, making due allowances, we find outlined (1) the dispositions necessary to receive Holy Communion worthily, and these are freedom from grave sin, purity of conscience, the state of grace—in a word, *life of the soul* ; and (2) the dispositions requisite to enable us to receive Holy Communion very worthily and very profitably, and these dispositions are true piety, fervent devotion, right intention, a sincere desire to grow in the grace of God and amend our faults—in a word, *health of the soul*. Life of the soul is necessary to make a good Communion—health of the soul to make a very good Communion ; life of the soul is necessary to avoid making a bad or sacrilegious Communion—health of the soul to avoid a tepid and less fruitful Communion ; the first is necessary to receive the Lord's body worthily—the second is necessary to receive with abundant fruit.

The first disposition requisite, then, is the spiritual life of the

soul which is nothing else than sanctifying grace. It is that nuptial garment referred to in the Gospel, without which it is not permissible to sit down to the Eucharistic banquet. Now, sanctifying grace is absolutely incompatible with the state of mortal sin ; and hence if we are conscious of mortal sin we must purify ourselves properly from that contagion before going to Holy Communion.

That this is the first and most essential preparation for Holy Communion, the Church, following the words of St. Paul, has always taught : *But let a man prove himself ; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice*¹—words which convey no mere counsel, but a strict command. *Let a man prove himself*—that is, let each one interrogate his own conscience ; let him see, search, examine what it is in the sight of God, and whether it possesses the requisite purity. If not, then let him, as the Council of Trent lays down, procure that purity of conscience by means of the sacrament of Penance.

By means of the sacrament of Penance. Do not imagine you can do without that sacrament and supply its place by an act of contrition. That contrition without confession does not suffice was clearly laid down by the Council of Trent ; and to deprive men's indolence or malice of the excuse that might be made for eluding confession, by constituting themselves their own judges and relying on a simple act of contrition even at the risk of profaning the sacrament, the Council expressly declares and defines that " no one conscious of having mortal sin on his soul, no matter how contrite he may be, is to dare approach Holy Communion without previous sacramental confession"—a law that not only binds lay people, but priests who are preparing to celebrate Mass.

Confession, then, comes first of all and indispensably—not any kind of confession at all, but a good and well-prepared confession—a confession which must not be a matter of mere custom, without any intention of leading a better life, without any sorrow for sin committed, without any true resolution to avoid it for the future.

No, I repeat, any kind of confession at all will not suffice, but it must be prepared and made in such a way as to leave no reasonable room for remorse, and to enable us to form a prudent judgment that we have been re-established in the grace of God.

A state of grace, then, is necessary for the worthy reception of Holy Communion, and a person who receives Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin is guilty of a very serious crime. On that crime, which we call sacrilegious Communion, I intend to speak at some length in our next instruction.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 28.

Twelfth Instruction on the Sacraments

ENORMITY OF A SACRILEGIOUS COMMUNION

THE first and most essential disposition for Holy Communion, as I pointed out in our last instruction, is the state of grace—purity of conscience—excluding all guilt of mortal sin. Without this disposition the Communion would be nothing more or less than a sacrilege. Before going any further, then, it will be necessary to examine and ponder deeply on two things of the utmost importance: (1) The enormity of a sacrilegious Communion; and (2) the danger of committing this enormity.

I. As for the first point, I find in St. Paul two very strong expressions which bring vividly before the eyes the dreadful nature of this sin—expressions well calculated to instil terror into anyone who has even a spark of faith.

In the first place he says that whoever communicates unworthily *is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*.¹ The essential holiness of Jesus Christ, as proposed to us by our faith, should readily make clear to us the direct intrinsic opposition between Him and sin. Christ and sin are two terms so mutually opposed and incompatible that they cannot be united without becoming an object of horror and abomination in the sight of God. What union, asks St. Paul, what alliance can there be between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial? *What fellowship hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?*² Behold here a sin, the intrinsic malice of which is enormous.

In the second place the same Apostle adds: *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself*.³ Behold here a sin terrible in its consequences. Let us thoroughly penetrate these two truths in order to derive thence a salutary horror of this crime.

The monstrous alliance alluded to is only too well realized in us if we approach the holy table with a conscience stained by mortal sin and in possession of the devil. Is it not true that the nature and property of this sacrament is to introduce Jesus Christ personally into us, unite Him intimately to us, incorporate Him with us? Now,

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 27.

² 2 Cor. vi. 14.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 29.

to receive Him in a state of mortal sin, what else is it than to offer Him a habitation the most abominable, the most unworthy of Him, and to force Him in spite of Himself to dwell with sin and live with the demon, His great, implacable enemy? Now, what crime can be imagined more abominable than this? If every sinner despises God when he tramples on His laws and His will, what will be said of the man who dishonours Him directly in His person? If every profaner of a holy and consecrated object commits a very grave sin, what will be said of the man who not only profanes the sacred vessels, the ciborium, relics, altars, but the very Holy of holies, the body and blood of the Lord? Finally, if each sinner is truly guilty of the death of Jesus Christ, since by sin he revives the impious cause of that death, what should be said of the man who nails Him within his own breast to a far more bitter cross than that of Calvary?

Yes, the words of St. Paul: *He is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, show us that in this sin there is a malice nothing short of *Deicide*. And, in fact, does not being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord mean exactly the same as putting Him to death? This is the meaning given it by the Church: "He shall be punished as if he had murdered Christ." It is in this sense also that the Fathers understood it, for they compare the crime of an unworthy Communion to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the Jews, and they discover in it a complexity of circumstances rendering it even more grave. For, after all, the Jews crucified Jesus Christ without knowing Him, whereas if they had known Him, as St. Paul remarks, they would not have crucified Him. They crucified Him in a body that was still mortal and passible; and in crucifying Him they unconsciously accomplished the will of the Father who willed to derive the salvation of the world and the greater glory of Christ from that crucifixion.

The sacrilegious communicants, on the other hand, raise up within themselves a kind of cross for Jesus Christ, even now when He reigns glorious in heaven, and in spite of the fact that they recognize and adore Him as their true God; a cross not of salvation, but of perdition to themselves; a cross not of honour to Jesus Christ, but injurious, ignominious, insulting to Him—and all this in the very moment in which Jesus Christ shows them the deepest token of love, and holds out to them, in His infinite tenderness, a gift of such surpassing glory as to fill heaven, and we may almost say, hell itself, with astonishment—in that very moment in which Jesus Christ enters into their hearts to pour forth over them the treasures of His graces, nay gives them His own very Self. O what an excess of guilt, of ingratitude, of perfidy, of betrayal! Who can ever explain it? Now all this is

comprised in St. Paul's sentence : *He is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* ; nor is there any fear of this being a mere exaggeration, since it is a truth declared by God Himself who cannot deceive ; and hence we must accept it and believe it, even though we do not understand how it happens.

But if the enormity of this sin is such and so great, what are its consequences ? Baneful, indeed, are they and terrible. St. Paul sums them up in these words : *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.*

We cannot read, without deep emotion, that passage in ecclesiastical history wherein is related the dread manner in which the heresiarch Pyrrhus was condemned in the Lateran Council (649). During the sitting of this Council, while the divine Sacrifice was being offered up according to custom, the Pontiff had the consecrated chalice carried to the throne, and dipping his pen in the Redeemer's blood—that very blood by which the world was redeemed and saved—he wrote the excommunication and condemnation of the unhappy heresiarch. The Fathers of the Council shuddered at the sight, and all the bystanders shook with terror.

More horrible by far is the fate of him who communicates unworthily. It is not merely on paper that his condemnation is written in the blood of the Redeemer—that blood is printed on his own soul. He swallows that blood, he absorbs it, he incorporates it with himself, in such a way as to make it part of himself, like food and drink in the stomach ; and—he *eats and drinks judgment to himself*. Just as poison on being swallowed spreads throughout the body with all its deadly qualities, and once these have seized on the body, it is difficult indeed to dislodge them ; in like manner the Eucharistic food received unworthily becomes a poison which spreads its ravages all round, is converted into our substance, and into our blood in such a way that it is hardly possible to separate them. What a strange and mournful picture is this ! Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who is the fountain of benediction and grace, life's heavenly food, the soul's comfort and delight, the pledge, and earnest, and anticipation of bliss unending, changed into a fatal poison, a deadly food, a thing of ruin, a sign and brand of reprobation ! For *he eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord*. But that is not all.

The malediction which he who is guilty of a sacrilegious Communion swallows, and which he bears within him graven deeply in his vitals, cannot fail to act banefully both on soul and body. Yes, even on the body in the shape of weakness, infirmity, or premature death. Hence, continues the same Apostle, if many are ill, weak, feeble, and even prematurely struck by sudden death (which is so

frequent in our days), it is because in this sacrament of life they eat to their own condemnation : *Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep.*¹

Now if these external and corporal punishments are not realized always and in all persons, the interior and spiritual chastisements are always and everywhere verified, in a manner less sensible, it is true, but yet more terrible—spiritual blindness, abandonment of God, complete and total subjection to the devil—all of which hurry along the soul from sin to sin, from excess to excess, and in the end lead to final impenitence. Such are the deplorable effects of the *judgment* that is eaten by an unworthy Communion.

Think on Judas, the first example of this crime, and the first example also of the dread punishment meted out to it by divine justice. Though he was a miser, evil-disposed, and uncharitable ; though he had in several ways already allowed the demon to enter his heart ; yet he was never fully and completely possessed by him until he had dared to make an unworthy Communion : *And after the morsel, Satan entered into him.*² Then it was that the devil blinded him ; led him to execute the hateful designs he had conceived of selling his divine Master, but which up till then he had not carried into effect, owing to a glimmer of conscience and light still remaining ; drove him all at once to agree with the enemies of Jesus Christ as to the price of his infamous betrayal ; and finally tempted him remorselessly to that unhappy end known to all, of hanging himself in despair.

Oh, all you who are tempted to make a bad Communion, remember this example ; and if anyone amongst us should be tempted to approach the holy table unworthily, should he not feel his feet tottering under him, and his very vitals congealed !

I do not mean to imply by all this that the crime in question is unpardonable or irreparable, or that he who is conscious of having been guilty of it, should, like Judas, abandon himself to despair. No—amongst the very persons who crucified the Redeemer on Golgotha, heaping on His sacred Person every kind of injury and outrage, we know there were some who truly repented and found grace and salvation in the very blood they had unworthily shed. On the same terms, then,—on the condition of a sincere repentance—there is hope of pardon and salvation for those also who have renewed the perfidy of the executioners. The conclusion to be drawn from all that has been thus far said is, that we can never fear the crime of a sacrilegious Communion too much, nor weep and regret it too bitterly before God, when once it has been committed.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 30.

² John xiii. 27.

2. But you may say your conscience does not reproach you with this crime, because, you say, you believe you are in a state of grace every time you go to Holy Communion. Now this brings me to the second point, regarding which it is necessary to be correctly instructed. All that I have said on the enormity of a sacrilegious Communion would be quite useless, and would produce not the smallest fear in you, if I did not further examine a pretext under the shadow of which many persuade themselves that they are free from this crime, and if along with pointing out its enormity I did not also draw attention to the danger and the *facility* of committing it.

I do not wish to disturb your minds needlessly, but only to inspire you with just self-diffidence, when I ask you to bear in mind that there are two classes of persons who fall into this sin. The first are they who, though perfectly conscious of being in mortal sin either because they have not confessed their sins at all or because they have concealed some sin, nevertheless through human respect, or for some other vain motive, shamelessly approach the holy table. They are certainly all the more guilty since they act with full malice and deliberation; but these abandoned souls—these hearts of stone—are few. The second are those who, on insufficient grounds, persuade themselves they are in the grace of God, and confidently approach Holy Communion. These are far more numerous—they are, like the first class, sacrilegious communicants; less guilty than those, perhaps, but still guilty of a real sacrilege, because their ignorance, being as it is voluntary and culpable, does not lessen the fact that they really and consciously approach Holy Communion without being in the state of grace.

Now, who are they? They are those whose previous confessions have been defective. For, I ask: Are all confessions good, salutary, and holy? Are they each and all sufficient to restore us to the grace of God, and hence preserve us from a sacrilegious Communion? No, by no means. Some confessions are bad, because a mortal sin has been wilfully concealed. But an accurate account of our sins is not enough for a good confession—the accusation of our sins must be accompanied by real sorrow for those sins and by a firm purpose of satisfying for them and amending our lives. Before approaching the holy table you must be sure that there are not still found within your heart feelings of hatred only half repressed; impure passions burning steadily; evil attachments and associations still undissolved, or only half dissolved; proximate occasions not abandoned, or abandoned only with the secret intention of resuming them later on; acts of restitution to be made and promised to be made, yet never carried out; grave faults and defects of which you accuse yourselves through habit and routine, but which remain ever the same; and so on to the end.

And if, even after an exact confession of your sins, you find that such is your condition—that you have had no true contrition and no real purpose of amendment—do you consider that you are fit to approach Holy Communion? Or rather do you not consider that to neglect the voice of conscience in the matter is a wilful closing of your eyes to the light? And if you do approach Holy Communion in this condition of soul, what kind of Communion do you consider yours to be? Nay, must you not admit that your confession is only a mere excuse to lull your conscience to sleep—not a serious attempt to restore the grace of God to your souls? And if this is so is not the Communion that follows it a bad and sacrilegious Communion?

But, you may say: I am in good faith; I believe I am in the state of grace when I approach Holy Communion; and does not good faith suffice to preserve me from a sacrilegious Communion? Yes, certainly, provided it is genuine; but this is not genuine good faith; it is a groundless and presumptuous confidence—a voluntary, culpable error—a gross illusion which could not exist if you had made that sincere, strict, and loyal self-examination which the Apostle demands: *Let a man prove himself, and thus let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice.*

This, then, is what I am anxious should be borne in mind by those who do not frequent the sacraments, and whose life is marked with much irregularity. I know how great is the efficacy of a good confession in reconciling us to God; but I also know how few indeed are those who, living habitually in sin and remaining in this state up to the very day of their Communion, go through confession properly, and are penetrated with that salutary compunction which is all-effective, and smoothes all difficulties; and hence those persons do indeed approach the holy table, confessed it is true, but not justified. Alas! on this head the number of unworthy Communions is far greater than is imagined.

For the love of God and for our own sake, let us reflect on our Communions. The bread we receive is no ordinary bread, and we risk our all in receiving it badly. Let us examine ourselves severely, let us make our confessions as exactly and as fervently as we should like to do when preparing for death; be very sure that less purity is not necessary to receive Jesus Christ than to appear before the tribunal of God. This one reflection should suffice to make us prepare in such a way as never to expose ourselves to the danger of a sacrilegious Communion.

On the other hand, I am far from desiring to see you fall into an opposite error, which would be that of not communicating at all, on

the pretext of desiring to avoid sacrilege. There are several who voluntarily remain away under the pretext of their unworthiness, and who even wish to derive merit from their abstention, as if it were an act of respect and reverence to God. But they ought to know that as long as they do not try to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way, their respect is false, and they transgress God's precept in another way.

Their respect is false. Grave sins are assuredly an obstacle to Holy Communion, but an obstacle which can be removed. If the sins you have committed keep you back, repent of them, detest them, blot them out by a good confession, and the obstacle disappears. But if you refuse to remove the obstacle, how pretend that respect keeps you back? It simply means that you are more attached to your sins than to the body and blood of Jesus Christ—that you prefer to remain without Him, rather than without your sins. And is this respect? No, it is not respect—it is blindness, it is hatred of your own soul, it is a baneful attachment to sin.

They transgress God's precept in another way. For it is certain that we are bound to receive Holy Communion worthily on certain occasions—at Easter, for instance; and consequently we are bound to remove the obstacles that stand in the way. Now, if we do not remove these obstacles it is clear that we thereby offend against the precepts that binds us to receive Holy Communion at Easter, and thus our pretended respect for Holy Communion leads us to break the precept that regulates the reception of Holy Communion.

Nevertheless, in preparing for Holy Communion, it would be little indeed to content ourselves with exemption from mortal sin. We should not only strive, when communicating, to avoid sacrilege, but also to make a very good and a very fruitful Communion. For this, something more than the bare state of grace—the mere exemption from mortal sin—is required. And what is that? We shall see in our next instruction.

Thirteenth Instruction on the Sacraments

DISPOSITIONS FOR FERVENT COMMUNION

WHEN we wish to approach Holy Communion we should not merely confine ourselves to avoiding the profanation of the Sacrament, but we should also make it our aim to honour it ; it is not enough to avoid the crime of a sacrilegious Communion—it is also requisite that we should make a holy and fruitful Communion.

To avoid profaning this sacrament it is, as we have seen, enough to be in the state of grace—a state which excludes the presence of all grave sin in the soul. This is the first disposition essentially requisite to avoid staining our souls with the guilt of sacrilege. But to honour the Blessed Eucharist, and derive therefrom all the precious fruits which it is destined to produce, there is also required of us a true spirit of piety, or fervour of devotion, and this is the second disposition which now remains to be explained—a disposition that is, at the very least, highly desirable, and is even necessary towards the complete and perfect effect of the sacrament.

And in fact, even though conscience has nothing serious to reproach us with, yet if we approach the holy table with little devotion, with tepidity, with languor, with a heart seared by habitual defects, and through custom rather than from a desire to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ—to be seen by others rather than to please God—in a word, without lively faith and ardent charity, we do not, it is true, commit a sacrilege, but we derive less fruit from Communion ; for while we do not profane the Lord's body positively by a conscience stained with grave sin, yet we have not that just discernment which it merits, thereby rendering ourselves less pleasing to God—*not discerning the body of the Lord*.

In what, then, does this spirit of piety and fervent devotion consist ? In two things—in purifying the soul from affection to sin, and in adorning it with holy virtues.

1. First of all in purifying the soul, and in resolving to free it as far as possible from all affection towards every sort of sin.

* See Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, Dec. 20, 1905, on Daily Communion, p. 163 *supra*. It should be noted that the dispositions referred to in the text are not those on which the recent Decree have any bearing, but are on a far different level.

There is no question here of those venial faults committed without premeditation and through mere human frailty, and from which even the holiest souls are not exempt. It cannot properly be said that an affection exists towards these, and hence they are not an obstacle in the way of a copiously fruitful Communion.

Nor is there precisely any question of those venial faults which are committed with a certain amount of advertence, which arise from weakness and habit rather than from full and perfect will, and the commission of which is attended by sincere sorrow. Properly speaking no affection can be said to be retained towards such faults, while on the other hand the Eucharist is destined to diminish their number and hinder consent to them.

But the question does concern those venial faults which are committed voluntarily and with full reflection, and which, for some souls, constitute the whole tone and colour of their lives and the habitual and invariable matter of their confessions, and which they accuse themselves of without the least intention to amend or avoid them. Thus ; *With regard to God*, such sins would be habitual and voluntary tepidity and sloth in matters of piety, and negligence in the discharge of the duties of our state—slight, if you will, but perfectly voluntary, and multiplied beyond measure. *In reference to our neighbour*, want of charity, patience, toleration—rancour, jealousy, coldness, contempt, murmuring—light, if you will, but continual—an habitual spirit of contradiction, criticism, complaint, disruption of peace and charity. *In regard to ourselves*, excessive attachment to riches, vanities, pleasures, friendships—not dishonest, if you will, but too tender and intense—repeated dissipation, impatience in sufferings, and want of resignation, little or no abnegation of self or of one's own will, and so on. Such are the faults which are multiplied daily above the number of the hairs of our heads, and for which we do really preserve an affection ; and it is faults such as these that in great part hinder the perfect fruit of Communion as long as we carry them with us to the holy table without any feeling of sorrow for them, and as long as we continue to remain attached to them in our hearts.

Now judge whether it is becoming that a divine Guest should be lodged in a heart stained by so many vicious affections, inclined to so many imperfections, soiled with so many venial sins that have never been amended and are freely committed. True, indeed, these sins do not destroy charity and sanctifying grace, but they are displeasing to God, who is the God of purity and essentially an enemy to every kind of sin ; and hence they greatly diminish the correspondence required of us and stand in the way of the fullness of that tender and generous love with which Jesus Christ desires to

unite Himself to us in the Eucharist. And, indeed, where was there ever a master, no matter how liberally inclined, who is willing to heap his favours and graces on that servant who does not correspond to his affection and who shows himself careless and negligent in much that concerns his service ?

It is highly expedient, then, to purify our souls thoroughly from every trace of vicious affection. This is what Jesus Christ taught us by His wonderful example, says the Roman Catechism following on the teaching of the Fathers. Though the Apostles were clean, yet before giving them Holy Communion He washed their feet, thus showing us, by this mysterious action, the extreme cleanliness and purity with which it is desirable to approach the holy table—a purity which should exclude not only all mortal sins, but even all deliberate affection for venial sins which were precisely prefigured in that dust attached to the feet of the Apostles.

Now if this disposition of detachment from all affection towards sin is expedient in him who desires to communicate with great fruit even one single time, much more is it expedient in the case of those who approach Holy Communion frequently. It is certainly far from edifying to see persons whose life is, so to say, made up of continual Communion derive no solid fruit therefrom, or display no advance in fervour and solid piety. Now, whence arises this great inconsistency ? It arises precisely from all the venial faults which are committed with full advertence, which are allowed to remain un-amended, and which are carried with us to the holy table.

That which we often observe to happen in the body takes place in the soul. Thus we sometimes see persons who though they live on choice, excellent, and substantial food, nevertheless are thin, pale, weak, delicate, or ill, in consequence of the unhealthy or harmful acids abounding in their bodies and hindering digestion. Thus it is with many souls. Although they frequently approach Holy Communion, and frequently feed on this divine food which of its nature is most substantial, they nevertheless continue languid, weak, and exhausted ; nor do they ever raise themselves an inch above the earth, in consequence of the many venial faults, attachments, inclinations, and worldly occupations which they will not renounce, and which impede the fruit intended for them by Jesus Christ.

2. But to receive Jesus Christ with the greatest fervour and piety it is not enough to purify the soul from all sinful affections ; it is also expedient to adorn the soul with virtue. In this respect it will be well to distinguish the time immediately preceding, from that subsequent to, Communion.

(a) Before Communion we should open the eyes of the soul, pene-

trate with lively faith into that sacramental cloud which hides Jesus Christ from our bodily gaze, and contemplate and consider Him under all aspects such as He really is—God of infinite majesty and grandeur, God of infinite purity and holiness, God of infinite goodness and clemency; our Saviour, our Spouse, the Physician of our souls; burning with desire to unite Himself to us, load us with His gifts, and make us one with Himself. From living and ardent faith like this will spring not only exterior respect, modesty, and recollection, but also and by a natural consequence, all the internal acts which should form part of a proximate preparation for Holy Communion, such as:—

Acts of humble adoration, and of profound self-annihilation—reflecting on the one hand on His sovereign grandeur, and on the other on our lowliness and nothingness.

Acts of holy and salutary fear—contemplating His holiness on the one hand, and our own malice, corruption, and unworthiness on the other. This fear will excite within us a contrition ever more and more heartfelt and intense which will in the end purify our souls, and destroy therein every unbecoming affection.

Acts of confidence and of ardent desire of approaching Him—remembering on the one hand our own poverty and need, and on the other hand the goodness of Jesus Christ, the source of all good, in inviting us and pressing us to go to Him: *Come to Me, all you that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you.*¹

And above all, *acts of perfect love* of that God who in this sacrament of love gives Himself entirely to us, ardently desiring to unite our hearts to His with the sweet and powerful chains of the tenderest charity, and transform us into Himself.

From the combination and union of all these affections comes that holy fervour with which we should strive to be filled, inflamed, consumed, when we approach the holy table.

Do not imagine that this is too much to expect. Let us remember the profound veneration with which the Magi approached Him, only to recognize and adore Him in the manger; the faith of the woman suffering from an issue of blood, who only desired to touch the hem of His garment; the humility of the centurion, who considered himself unworthy to receive Him into his house; the ardent affection with which Mary Magdalene, prostrate at His feet, kissed them and washed them with her tears. It is the same Jesus who comes in person to take up His dwelling within us.

No. Our dispositions cannot be too perfect. Nay, there should even be the purity of the angels and the ardour of the Seraphim to

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

approach the holy table—and even that would be all too little. No matter how much we do to prepare, we can never do too much. And hence it is that at the moment of receiving the sacred Host, we should pour forth a short but fervent prayer beseeching Jesus Christ to supply, by His grace, for all our defects, and to pour into our hearts the requisite dispositions—recognizing that no matter how carefully we may have prepared, we are always infinitely unworthy of so great a gift.

(b) *After Communion.* But the fruit of the Eucharist depends largely on the good use of the time immediately following Communion. It is an all-important moment for us—a most precious and acceptable time—a time that would be an object of envy to the angels of Paradise were they capable of any such feeling. For, coming away from the altar with the sacramental species within our breasts, we carry with us the true, real, corporeal presence of Jesus Christ; our body is the true tabernacle of the living God, and we can say in all truth that the plenitude of His divinity dwells within us corporeally. Hence it is that the divine Father from on high fixes His loving gaze on us who are the hosts of His only-begotten Son; and invisible legions of angels surround us and accompany us, veiling their faces through reverence, admiring our happiness and the sovereign goodness of God who has become our Guest and our food. How thoughts such as these should stir us up, impress us, and occupy our minds if we had only one spark of faith!

What, then, does it imply to receive Jesus Christ within us, and at the same time to fail to show Him the requisite respect—remaining cold, indifferent, and distracted in His presence, or forgetting all about Him after a few minutes? This certainly cannot take place without disrespect to Him—indeed to act thus, even to a person of this world who came to pay us a visit, would be a downright insult; nor can it happen without our own loss, since by thus acting, we allow the most precious moments of grace to slip away fruitlessly.

Let us, then, even after the sacramental species have been consumed, remain at least a quarter of an hour devoutly with Jesus Christ; let us ask Him, while He is still really present within us, to impart His graces to us and pour them forth copiously into our souls. On leaving the sacred table, let us retire apart in profound recollection, closing our senses to all exterior things; let us remain kneeling and absorbed in the great thought of the happiness that is ours in possessing Jesus Christ within us; and let us pour out our hearts in holy affections.

The acts to which we should devote ourselves during those moments are principally three—Adoration, Thanksgiving, and Petition.

And first of all let us admire the wonderful abasement of a God who did not disdain to come in person to us and unite Himself to our clay. St. Elizabeth, on being visited by the Blessed Virgin, who then bore the Word of God in her womb, broke forth into those words of astonishment and joy : *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*¹—why this great honour that the mother of my Lord comes to visit me ? But with how much more reason can we utter the same words in that moment in which, in His infinite, unutterable, wonderful condescension, Jesus Christ has come into our hearts, and, to use the expression of St. John Chrysostom, mixes His divine flesh with ours, His blood with ours, just as two pieces of melted wax become mixed and commingled.—Whence is this to me that my Lord should come to me ?

Consequently let us in the second place thank the Lord, with our whole heart ; and to correspond to this great blessing, let us make a complete oblation of ourselves to Him, consecrating to Him all that we have and all that we are—our thoughts, our affections, our liberty, our body, our soul, our life—giving ourselves unreservedly to Him, as He has given Himself completely to us.

And that these offerings be not a vain and empty ceremony, we should put them in practice, determine exactly the particular points regarding which we feel that God desires of us a reform and change of life, and make the corresponding resolutions. *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*² said St. Paul on the way to Damascus, when he was visibly admonished by the presence and voice of the divine Saviour. He spoke sincerely, without reserve or exception, and his protestation was as efficacious as sincere. It should be the same with us : *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?* Lord, what should I do to please Thee ? What sacrifice dost Thou desire of me ? What is there in me that displeases Thy all-pure eyes ? From my whole heart I submit in all, I offer Thee all, I consecrate myself all to Thee.

Penetrated in fine with the sense of our weakness and misery, let us ask of God, while He is still within us, those graces of which we know we stand in need, compelling Him, so to say, with loving and holy violence, to grant them, and saying to Him as Jacob said to the angel, *I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.*³ At all times we can profitably demand of God the graces of which we stand in need ; but never can we ask them with greater confidence and certainty of obtaining them, than at that moment in which we possess Jesus Christ within us. Can we imagine that He will refuse us anything after having given us Himself ? Let us then fervently beseech Him to deliver us from our

¹ Luke i. 43.² Acts ix. 6.³ Gen. xxxii. 26.

unregulated passions, and especially from that which predominates and tyrannizes over us ; to give us light, contrition, strength against temptation, stability, fervour, and perseverance ; to fill us with His divine spirit, with purity, meekness, charity, patience, mortification ; and finally to give us His holy love, which embraces all and comprehends all. In the midst of the devout embraces of our soul with Him, He will not fail to hear us. *Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.*¹

Finally, on leaving the church after this fervent intercourse with God, how can we lose the feeling and memory thereof so suddenly ? How give way immediately to dissipation and disorder, and in a short time lose all the fruit of Communion ? Nay, let us rather make a fixed resolution to put in practice all that we have promised God at the moment of Communion, and to remain closely united to Him.

These few reflections selected from the many that could be proposed on this subject, seem sufficient to let you know the proper way to approach Holy Communion worthily and profitably. Would that they were practised faithfully ! You would no longer have to sigh over many fruitless Communions. It is a maxim of the Fathers and masters of the spiritual life that a single Communion is sufficient to make us great saints, and yet, O wonder of wonders ! in practice a hundred Communions do not suffice to make us even middling Christians ! And why ? The fault is ours, and it is due to our imperfect dispositions.

Pharao in a dream saw seven very beautiful and very fat kine ; then he saw seven others, the leanest and thinnest that could be imagined ; yet they had all one and the same pasture—a striking image of the difference that is found to exist even amongst those who frequent Communion with precisely the same regularity. Some steadily grow in virtue, fervour, and piety ; while others make no progress, but remain ever the same, with the same miseries and imperfections.

Let us change our lives in this respect, and let us think well on three things :—

1. That the sacraments, efficacious though they are in their nature, operate more or less in proportion to our capacity and dispositions. Hence the greater our purity and fervour, the greater will be the measure of grace we shall receive.

2. That the greatest, the holiest, and the most important action of our lives is Holy Communion, and hence there is no other which it is so dangerous to perform through habit or routine. It is one

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 4.

thing to be in the habit of doing a thing will ; it is another thing to do it merely through habit. The habit of communicating several times a year, monthly, or weekly, or even daily, is highly laudable ; but it would cease to be so if Communion were made merely through habit, for in that case all would be reduced to a mere material practice of piety, which, not being animated by a true spirit of devotion, would produce little or no fruit.

3. That a fruitless Communion is always a great evil, because it deprives us of the graces that are attached to this, the most august of all the sacraments ; makes us fall into a state of ever-increasing languor and weakness ; and hence disposes us insensibly to a sacrilegious Communion.

Keep before your eyes, then, the words of advice given in recent instructions on the preparation for Holy Communion, and never fail to bring with you to the holy table the twofold dispositions of purity and fervour. Fortified with the first disposition, you will avert all danger of profaning the body of the Lord and of committing a sacrilege ; adorned with the second you will be worthy to receive the bread of angels holily and profitably. '

Fourteenth Instruction on the Sacraments

ON FREQUENT COMMUNION

IN recent instructions I have explained the dispositions that are necessary for a worthy Communion, and expedient for a copiously fruitful Communion; I have also enumerated the admirable effects produced in us by Communion; and from all that has been said it will be sufficiently clear that if we desire to experience these effects in all their fullness, we must not allow a long interval to intervene between one Communion and another.

I purpose, however, to conclude the instructions on the sacrament of the Eucharist with an earnest exhortation to communicate frequently. In doing so, I shall first set forth the motives that should induce us to communicate frequently, and then I shall examine the various reasons or pretexts that are usually alleged for not going to Communion frequently.

I know well that the precept of the Church obliges us to no more than one single Communion in the course of the year—at Easter. But this precept has been thus limited and restricted *by reason of the hardness of our hearts*¹ as I have already pointed out several times—I mean that the Church, recognizing the sloth, distaste, and aversion on the part of so many souls, did not, prudent mother as she is, care to demand more nor impose on her children a greater number of Communions, so as not to expose them to the occasion of communicating unworthily on the one hand, or of transgressing her command and thus sinning on the other.

But it is one thing to say that a single Communion suffices to avoid transgressing the Church's precept, and another thing to say that it is sufficient for a good Christian life. Apart altogether from the precept of the Church, are we not bound to comply with the desires of God, and to make use of the most efficacious means He has prepared to accomplish our eternal salvation?

I. There are two great motives which should induce us to communicate frequently. The first is the intention of Jesus Christ, the Author of this sacrament—an intention sufficiently plain and evident from the manner in which He instituted it, and from the tenor of the expressions used by Him when speaking of it.

¹ Matt. xix. 8.

(a) Regarding the *manner*. He gave us this sacrament as a food, and instituted it under the form of a repast, to signify and let us see that it is a food, a nourishment which we should use, not rarely as one uses medicines, but frequently, like our daily food. And as in the case of the life of the body, all kinds of food are not equally suitable to all men, what has He done? He has selected that food which cannot be done without, which nourishes all without distinction—the rich and the poor, the great and the little—I mean that daily bread which we ask of the Lord, and which is the first and most important support of life—in a word, He instituted it under the appearance of bread, our ordinary and daily food.

(b) In the second place, the expressions used by Him could not be stronger or more pressing. He invites us expressly to approach and nourish ourselves with His heavenly bread which is Himself: *I am the living bread, come down from heaven*,¹ a bread of life—not merely of life short and fleeting, but life immortal and eternal. *I am the bread of life: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever*. And should His wishes and His invitations not suffice, He adds the terrible threat, if we do not receive it, to exclude us from life eternal: *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you*. We cannot, then, doubt that it is the intention of Jesus Christ to see us often at His holy table.

2. The second reason for communicating frequently is based on the admirable virtue of this sacrament and on our own needs.

As for our needs, they cannot be greater, no matter what the condition in which our soul happens to be. For, we are either penitents recently escaped from the state of sin, and in this state of weakness and convalescence we stand in need of strength to enable us to conquer and destroy our bad habits, and preserve the sanctifying grace we have received; or we are tepid, dispirited, and weak in the service of God, though habitually averse to grave irregularities, and in this very dangerous state of weakness and tepidity, it is highly important for us to take fresh courage, waken up, become reanimated, and fervent; or we are good, earnest, fervent Christians, and we have need to persevere in this state of piety and devotion, and even advance steadily along the path of perfection, since, according to the masters of the spiritual life, there is no standing still in the way of salvation—not to advance is to go back.

Now, where are we to find those graces of support, protection, and defence, if we are sinners only just converted; of courage, renewal, and fervour, if we are tepid; of stability, perseverance, and steady progress, if we are just and faithful to God, unless in the

¹ John vi. 51.

sacrament of the Eucharist ? The Eucharist, as I have already said, is the sovereign remedy prepared for us by God to preserve, strengthen, increase, and perfect, spiritual life in us incessantly. And as the infusion of graces must naturally be more or less abundant in proportion to the more or less frequent use we make of the sacrament, it follows as a necessary consequence that our needs being continual and incessant, the application of the remedy must also be frequent. A food, or a medicine, however good and salutary it may be, cannot produce a good and lasting effect if it is made use of only rarely ; and in the same way if we confine ourselves to communicating only at Easter or a little more frequently, we cannot hope to derive from it a profit proportionate and suitable to our needs.

I now come to answer the objections of timid souls, banish their fears, destroy the fatal prejudices and pretexts that keep so many away from the holy table who might otherwise communicate frequently.

The first excuse alleged for remaining away from Communion for a long time is a falsely-grounded respect for *the excellence and dignity of this great sacrament*, in view of which we consider ourselves unworthy to approach frequently. Assuredly there is to be found in religion nothing so august, divine, and venerable as the sacrament of the Eucharist ; but this ought not to be a reason for remaining aloof from it. If a sanctity, a purity, a perfection proportionate to the subject were required, then, indeed, we should always be unworthy to receive it—nay, the very angels in heaven, the most brilliant Seraphim, even the most blessed Virgin Mary, the purest and most perfect of all creatures, would not be worthy, since there is always an infinite distance between us and God, between the creature and the Creator.

It is not, consequently, a disposition fully adequate, and equal to, the subject that is required of us, but a disposition corresponding to our state and our strength. God will never regard as a fault that which is impossible to our weakness. If Jesus Christ deigns to dwell within us, if in His infinite condescension He finds His delight to be with the miserable children of men, if He has instituted this sacrament, not for the angels of heaven, but for men of this earth, it will suffice if we bring with us to His holy table a preparation proportionate to the miserable condition of our nature, fortified and purified and elevated by the help of that grace which God denies to none who do the best they can for Him.

“ So far so well,” you may reply ; “ but to communicate frequently requires a *great purity of life*, and that I do not consider I possess.”

Whatever be the purity of life demanded of you, it is neither impossible nor impracticable, and hence of itself cannot be an obstacle in the way of frequent Communion. It was beyond all doubt the intention of Jesus Christ that Communions should be frequent; and if on the other hand He commands us not to approach His holy table without a pure and innocent conscience, this purity and innocence, indispensable as they undoubtedly are, can and must be reconciled with frequent Communion. Now, though it is quite certain that no purity can be too great, yet why is it that we make so much of it and insist so strongly on it in connexion with frequent Communion? Is it out of a desire to acquire it in order to be able to approach Holy Communion frequently; or is it rather to have a plausible pretext for remaining away? And is it profanation of the Eucharist that we fear; or is it rather the sacrifices which would be imposed on us by preparing for its frequent reception?

"But," you further object, "in spite of all my efforts, I always find that, unlike others, I am full of *imperfections and defects*, and hence I do not think it is right for me to approach so often."

In reply to this we must bear in mind that there are two classes of failings and imperfections. If they are the result of mere human frailty, if they are due to weakness rather than to full and deliberate intention, then instead of being an obstacle, they are rather a reason for frequenting Holy Communion, which was instituted directly to deliver us from every kind of failing. It is precisely because we are weak, sickly, infirm, that we should have recourse to medicine and to the heavenly Physician who is ready to heal us perfectly. *They*, said our Lord, *that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill*¹—which amounts to this, that our consciousness of our defects is not a reason for remaining away from the sacrament, just as illness is not a reason why one who is ill should resort to no remedy.

With reference to daily failings that are voluntary and deliberate, while it is highly desirable that those who communicate frequently should be free from all deliberate venial sins and from all affection to them, it is, nevertheless, sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the firm intention of sinning no more; and if their resolution is sincere, it is impossible but that they will gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins and from all affection thereto. This is no mere private opinion, but it is the express teaching of the Catholic Church.*

In any event, since the failings in question are voluntary, they

¹ Matt. ix. 12.

* See Decree of the Congregation of the Council (Dec. 20, 1905), p. 163 *supra*.

can be removed, and hence cannot even form a plausible pretext for not communicating frequently. Instead, then, of considering that frequent Communion is inexpedient in consequence of daily failings, the proper conclusion would be that the importance of frequent Communion involves the expediency of reforming our life and correcting these failings. Thus, instead of saying, "My daily life is far from being as perfect as it should be, and therefore it is not lawful for me to communicate frequently," we should rather say: "I ought to communicate frequently, so as not to deprive my soul of the inestimable advantages to be derived therefrom; and since frequent Communion calls for a change in my present mode of life, I will strive to improve, correct, and purify it, so as to derive all possible advantage from Holy Communion."

If we have not this disposition it is evident that it is false respect that keeps us from Communion. For true respect is always accompanied by the two conditions of sorrow for not being able to approach frequently, and of the desire to do so. And when these two conditions are present we should spare neither care nor pains to render ourselves as worthy and well prepared as possible. To act otherwise would practically indicate that we do not regret being deprived of Holy Communion; that we prefer rather to live according to our own tastes than to communicate frequently; renounce Holy Communion rather than be obliged to lead a regular life. Surely this is not respect.

The pretexts referred to thus far are the pretexts of the careless and negligent, who would cover their abstention from Holy Communion under the veil of reverence for the sacrament; but there are other timid and pious souls who actually do remain away out of an excessive fear and timidity.

"How can I," they say, "approach the holy table frequently, if I find I derive no fruit from it, and if I am still the same—with the same miseries and imperfections?"

Now, leaving out of account the fruit which may be very real though unseen, is it not a fact that you are averse to the commission of grave sins? And is not the very fact that you are preserved from grave sin, though surrounded by many dangers and temptations, a great and valuable fruit of Holy Communion? As for certain slight defects which spring from your nature and character, and which are hardly ever entirely eradicated, but always more or less cling to you, to serve as a test, and the subject of combat and consequent merit—these should not keep you away from Communion, though it is always expedient when approaching the holy table to have the firm intention to watch over yourself more carefully, and, with the grace derived from the sacrament, to purify your conscience

ever more and more. This result is not achieved in a day, but is the work of a life-time. If in communicating you wait until your Communion renders you impeccable and altogether perfect, when do you think will that be ?

“ I would willingly approach frequently, but I experience little devotion ; I even find myself in a state of extreme aridity, tastelessness, and want of sensible devotion ; hence I fear I may commit sacrilege through want of actual devotion.”

You never commit a sacrilege when you are afraid of committing it, and do all in your power to avoid it. The fear of profaning the sacrament is indeed a good disposition ; but better still is the love which leads you to receive it as fervently as you can.

It is not required that devotion should be sensible. There is a great difference between devotion and sensible devotion, and a person can be very devout without feeling it. Moreover, sensible devotion is not always the surest or truest ; it is subject to many illusions, and in the long run does not depend altogether on our will. We should, then, as Thomas à Kempis observes, humble ourselves when we do not experience it, but its absence should not induce us to remain away from Communion. Make up for the want of a certain fervour of charity by humility, and the sentiment of our own unworthiness along with the lively desire of being united to Jesus Christ, and full and unreserved confidence in Him.

“ But would there not be danger of becoming too familiar towards the Blessed Sacrament, and hence of communicating through custom and habit ? ”

Custom and habit in good things are good and praiseworthy. Are we to abstain from hearing Mass daily, and saying our prayers daily, for fear of doing so through habit ? The habit of doing these two things is good, but we need not do them through habit ; for what is done merely out of habit is to a great extent done mechanically and without the spirit of true devotion. In this sense it is we say that habit is the greatest enemy of devotion ; for if we do not take care to stand on our guard the holiest and most excellent practices insensibly become purely mechanical actions without heart or soul, and hence with little merit or fruit. Preserve your good habits, then, but let them always be accompanied by a certain interior spirit of religion and piety.

Finally, there is a class of persons who, while perfectly recognizing the advantage, the importance, and the value of frequent Communion, say they have no time to practise it, owing to the many occupations which claim their attention daily.

Now, what reply are we to make to them ? Simply that there

could be no more feeble excuse ; as if the affairs of eternal salvation, which is the one important affair of our lives, and which is promoted by frequentation of the sacraments, was trivial and less important than our temporal interests. This excuse was reproved by Jesus Christ Himself in the parable of those who were invited to the great supper—a symbol of the Eucharistic supper—and reproved precisely because they had refused the invitation under the pretext of temporal affairs : *I have bought a farm ; I have bought five yoke of oxen ; I pray, thee, hold me excused.*¹ Their excuse was punished by exclusion from the eternal banquet, to which the Eucharistic banquet disposes us in such a way that we cannot remain away from the latter without being cut off from the former : *But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of My supper.*²

This excuse is not, then, admissible. And in fact can we believe that the time allotted us by the Saviour is given us to be completely devoted to affairs of this world, without even a thought on the world to come ? Is this the judgment we shall pass at the moment of death ?

Let us not, then, be deceived by the demon who tempts us by vain excuses—at one time by a false and hypocritical respect ; at another by an excessive fear and timidity ; at another, by our numerous worldly occupations—to stand aloof from this life-giving sacrament, and thus deprive ourselves of the most efficacious remedy which Jesus Christ has left to heal us from that internal fever which slowly drags us down to death eternal. “ Of this bread it is written,” says St. Ambrose, “ *they that go far from Thee shall perish.*”³

And now you will ask, what should be the frequency with which you should approach Holy Communion—whether monthly, fortnightly, weekly, or daily ? I do not undertake to decide—all will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. But this I do know : Our Holy Father Pope Pius X has, in a solemn decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, expressed his earnest desire that all the faithful, without any distinction of rank or condition, should be invited and induced to approach the holy table as often as possible and even daily, the only condition being that each communicant should be in a state of grace and should approach with a right and devout intention. The right and devout intention consists in this, that the person approaching the holy table should do so to please God, be more closely united to Him, and receive thence a divine remedy for his weakness and failings—and not through custom, or habit, or routine, or human respect, or vain glory. Furthermore, while this right and devout intention renders it expedient that those

¹ Luke xiv. 19.² Luke xiv. 24.³ Ps. lxxii. 27.

who communicate frequently should, as far as possible, be free from venial sins, or at least from such as are deliberate, and from all affection to venial sin, yet it is *sufficient* that they be free from mortal sin, and have the firm purpose of sinning no more. At the same time it should be remembered that the sacraments produce greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better and more fervent. Hence care should be taken to make a serious preparation before Communion, as well as a suitable thanksgiving after Communion, according to each one's capacity.

The advisability, then, of frequent Communion, can be no longer called into doubt. It is based on the very nature of the Eucharist, which was instituted as a food, on its intrinsic virtue and efficacy on the teaching and example of the saints, and on the spirit and mind and express wish of the Church, which desires to see the faithful lead such a life as will enable them to communicate daily.

But, as has been said, the practical application of this doctrine will largely depend on the circumstances of each individual case. The safest course will always be to consult your confessor, and to faithfully follow his advice. The one danger to avoid is that of being influenced by pride, vanity, human respect, or mere custom ; the one disposition required, besides the state of grace, is a right and devout intention—the desire to be united to Jesus Christ, and to become more and more devout and holy.

CHAPTER VII

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST—(continued)

THE ROMAN CATECHISM (PART II)

XV.—THE EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE

67.—The Eucharist is the special Sacrifice of the New Law. It now remains to explain the Eucharist as a Sacrifice, so that the pastor may know the chief truths which, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Trent, should be expounded to his flock on Sundays and Holidays regarding this mystery. The Eucharist is not only a treasure of heavenly riches by the proper use of which we win the grace and love of God, but it also possesses this special value that it affords us a means of testifying our thanks to God for the immense benefits we have received from Him.

Now, how agreeable and how dear to God is this victim, when rightly and legitimately offered to Him, may be gathered from the following consideration : Of the sacrifice of the Old Law it has been written : *Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire*,¹ and : *If Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would, indeed, have given it ; with burnt-offering Thou wilt not be delighted*. Yet these sacrifices were so pleasing to the Lord that, as Scripture testifies, He *smelled a sweet savour*,² that is, they were agreeable and acceptable to Him. What, then, should we not hope from that Sacrifice in which is immolated and offered that very Person of whom a voice from heaven twice proclaimed : *This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* ?³ The pastor, then, will carefully explain this mystery to his flock, in order that when assisting at Mass they may be enabled to meditate attentively and devoutly on the sacred function that is taking place in their presence.

68.—Instituted for two great ends. In the first place, then, let him point out that the Eucharist was instituted by our Lord for two purposes—to be the heavenly food of our souls enabling us to preserve and sustain our spiritual life ;

¹ Ps. xxxix. 7.² Gen. viii. 21.³ Matt. iii. 17.

and secondly, to enable the Church to possess a perpetual Sacrifice by means of which our sins might be expiated and our heavenly Father, too often gravely offended by our sins, be turned from wrath to mercy, from the severity of just punishment to clemency. Of this double purpose we have a figure and an image in the paschal lamb which it was customary for the children of Israel to offer and eat as a sacrifice and sacrament. And assuredly our Saviour, when about to offer Himself to God the Father on the altar of the Cross, could have given us no more striking token of His immense charity, than that of leaving us a visible Sacrifice by which the bloody Sacrifice that a little later was to be offered once for all on the Cross should be renewed, and its memory daily and profitably celebrated, down to the end of time by the Church in every land and clime.

- 69.—Difference between the sacrament and Sacrifice of the Eucharist. The difference between the sacrament and Sacrifice of the Eucharist is very great: As a sacrament it is effected by consecration; while every sacrifice consists in oblation. Hence

the Blessed Eucharist, while preserved in the tabernacle or when carried to the sick, has the nature of a sacrament not of a sacrifice. Moreover, as a sacrament, it is a cause of merit to those who worthily receive the sacred Host, and procures them all the advantages which we have already enumerated; while in its sacrificial aspect, it is not only a source of merit but also of satisfaction. Just as in His passion Christ our Lord merited for us and satisfied for us; so those who offer this Sacrifice, by which they are in communion with us, merit a share in the fruits of Christ's passion, and satisfy for their sins.

- 70.—Instituted at the Last Supper. With regard to the institution of this Sacrifice the Council of Trent has left no room for doubt, when it declared that it was instituted by Christ our Lord at the Last Supper, and when it anathematized all those who should dare to assert that a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God therein, or that the offering means nothing more than that Christ is given as our food.

- 71.—And offered to God alone. The Council has also taken care to show that this Sacrifice is offered to God alone, and has explained that, although the Church celebrates Masses in memory and honour of the saints, yet that the Sacrifice is not offered to the saints but to Him alone who has crowned them with immortal glory. Hence the priest

never says : I offer sacrifice to thee, Peter, or to thee, Paul ; but in offering sacrifice to God alone, he gives Him thanks for the signal victory achieved by the blessed martyrs, and implores their protection in order " that they whose memory we celebrate on earth may vouchsafe to intercede for us in heaven."

The truths which are taught by the Catholic Church regarding the reality of this Sacrifice, were received by her from the words of the Lord when on that last great night, committing the sacred mysteries to His Apostles, He said to them : *Do this for a commemoration of Me.* He then, as the holy Synod has defined, ordained them priests, and He commanded them and their successors in the priestly office to immolate and offer His body. The words of the Apostle in his letter to the Corinthians point to the same conclusion : *You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils ; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.*¹ Now by *the table of devils* we must understand the altar on which sacrifice was offered to them ; so, in like manner, for the reasoning of the Apostle to be conclusive *the table of the Lord* can mean nothing else than the altar on which sacrifice was offered to Him.

72.—Scripture authority for the Sacrifice of the New Law.

Should we seek figures and prophecies of this Sacrifice in the Old Testament, we first of all meet with the words of Malachy, who thus clearly foretold it : *From the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation ; for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts.*² The same Victim was also prefigured by all the various sacrifices which were made both before and after the promulgation of the Law of Moses ; for this Victim alone, being as it is the perfection and completion of all the others, comprises all the advantages which were prefigured by the other sacrifices.

But nowhere can we see a more striking figure of the Eucharist than in the sacrifice of Melchisedech, since Jesus Christ our Saviour declaring Himself to be constituted : *A priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech,*³ at His last supper offered to His eternal Father His precious body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 21.² Mal. i. 11.³ Heb. vii. 17 ; Ps. cix. 4.

XVI.—THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IS THE SAME AS THAT OF
THE CROSS

74.—Reasons why:
one Victim. We therefore, recognize that the Sacrifice which is offered at Mass, is and must be regarded as one and the same with that which was offered on the Cross, in the same way as the Victim is one and the same—Christ our Lord, who immolates Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross; there are not two victims, one bloody and the other unbloody, but one Victim alone whose sacrifice is daily renewed in the Eucharist ever since our Lord uttered the command: *Do this for a commemoration of Me.*

75.—One priest. Furthermore, the priest is one and the same, Christ our Lord—when consecrating His body and blood, the ministers who offer this Sacrifice do not act in their own name but in the person of Christ as is clear from the very words of consecration. The priest does not say: “This is the body of Christ,” but: *This is My body*—casting himself, so to say, into the person of Christ, he changes the substance of bread and wine into the real true substance of His body and blood.

XVII.—OBJECT AND FRUITS¹

76.—The Mass a
Sacrifice both
of praise and
propitiation. This being the case, it must unhesitatingly be taught, as the holy Council of Trent explained, that the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not merely a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving or a bare commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross, but is also truly a propitiatory Sacrifice appeasing God and rendering Him propitious to us. If, therefore, with pure heart, lively faith, and profound sorrow for our sins we immolate and offer this all holy Victim, we shall assuredly obtain mercy from the Lord, and His *grace in seasonable aid*.¹ So pleased is He with the sweet odour of this Victim that He grants us the gifts of grace and repentance, and pardons us our sins. Hence the Church’s solemn prayer which is thus expressed: “As often as the commemoration of this Victim is celebrated, so often is

¹ Heb. iv. 16.

the work of our salvation promoted ; for the copious fruits of that bloody Victim are poured in on us through this unbloody Sacrifice."

77.—And its efficacy extends both to the living and the dead. Finally, the pastor will show that such is the virtue of this Sacrifice that it is profitable not only to the celebrant and communicant, but also to all the faithful whether they still live with us on earth, or have passed away in the Lord without having fully expiated their faults. For, according to an altogether certain Apostolic tradition, it is offered none the less advantageously for them than for the sins of the living, their punishments, satisfactions, calamities, and trials of every kind.

78.—Is common to all the faithful. Hence it is easily seen that all Masses, being conducive as they are to the common interests and salvation of all, are common to all the faithful.

XVIII.—CEREMONIES OF MASS

79.—The ceremonies of Mass. The celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass is attended by many solemn and imposing rites, not one of which should be deemed superfluous or useless. On the contrary, all tend to display more strikingly the majesty of this august Sacrifice, and, by means salutary and mysterious, to excite the faithful to the contemplation of the divine things that are veiled under the Eucharistic species. We need not, however, dwell on this subject at greater length—it would demand a more lengthened exposition than the scope of this work allows ; and besides the pastor has ready to hand a number of books and commentaries composed by pious and learned men.

What has been said thus far will, with the assistance of God, be found sufficient to explain the principal truths regarding the Eucharist both as a Sacrament and a Sacrifice.

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

I. THE ESSENCE, INSTITUTION AND ENDS OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE
OF THE MASS

Q. Should the Holy Eucharist be considered only as a sacrament?

A. The Holy Eucharist, besides being a sacrament, is also the permanent Sacrifice of the New Law, which Jesus Christ left to His Church to be offered to God by the hands of His priests.

Q. In what in general does a sacrifice consist?

A. In general a sacrifice consists in the offering of some sensible thing to God and in some way destroying it as an acknowledgment of His Supreme Dominion over us and over all things.

Q. What is this Sacrifice of the New Law called?

A. This Sacrifice of the New Law is called the Holy Mass.

Q. What, then, is the Holy Mass?

A. The Holy Mass is the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ offered on our altars under the appearances of bread and wine, in commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

Q. Is the Sacrifice of the Mass the same as that of the Cross?

A. The Sacrifice of the Mass is substantially the same as that of the Cross, for the same Jesus Christ, who offered Himself on the Cross, it is who offers Himself by the hands of the priests, His ministers, on our altars; but as regards the way in which He is offered, the Sacrifice of the Mass differs from the Sacrifice of the Cross, though retaining the most intimate and essential relation to it.

Q. What difference and relation then is there between the Sacrifice

of the Mass and that of the Cross?

A. Between the Sacrifice of the Mass and that of the Cross there is this difference and relation, that on the Cross Jesus Christ offered Himself by shedding His Blood and meriting for us; whereas on our altars He sacrifices Himself without the shedding of His Blood, and applies to us the fruits of His passion and death.

Q. What other relation has the Sacrifice of the Mass to that of the Cross?

A. Another relation of the Sacrifice of the Mass to that of the Cross is, that the Sacrifice of the Mass represents in a sensible way the shedding of the Blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross, because, in virtue of the words of consecration, only the Body of our Saviour is made present under the species of the bread and only His Blood under the species of the wine; although by natural concomitance and by the hypostatic union, the living and real Jesus Christ is present under each of the species.

Q. Is not the Sacrifice of the Cross the one only Sacrifice of the New Law?

A. The Sacrifice of the Cross is the one only Sacrifice of the New Law, inasmuch as through it our Lord satisfied Divine Justice, acquired all the merits necessary to save us, and thus on His part fully accomplished our redemption. These merits, however, He applies to us through the means instituted by Him in His Church, among which is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Q. For what ends then is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered?

A. The Sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God for four ends: (1) To honour Him properly, and hence it is called *Latreutical*; (2) To thank Him for His favours, and hence it is called *Eucharistical*; (3) To appease Him, make Him due satisfaction for our sins, and to help the souls in Purgatory, and hence it is called *Propitiatory*; (4) To obtain all the graces necessary for us, and hence it is called *Impetratory*.

Q. Who is it that offers to God the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass?

A. The *first* and *principal* Offerer of the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass is *Jesus Christ*, while the priest is the minister who in the Name of Jesus Christ offers the same Sacrifice to the Eternal Father.

Q. Who instituted the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass?

A. Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass when He instituted the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist and said that *this* should be done in memory of His passion.

Q. To whom is the Holy Mass offered?

A. The Holy Mass is offered to God alone.

Q. If the Holy Mass is offered to God alone why are so many Masses celebrated in honour of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints?

A. Mass celebrated in honour of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints is always a Sacrifice offered to God alone; it is said to be celebrated in honour of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints to thank God for the gifts He has given them, and through their intercession to obtain from Him more abundantly the graces of which we have need.

Q. Who shares in the fruits of the Mass?

A. The entire Church shares in the fruits of the Mass, but more particularly: (1) The priest and those who assist at Mass, the latter being united with the priest; (2) Those for whom the Mass is applied, both living and dead.

2. THE WAY TO ASSIST AT HOLY MASS

Q. What is required in order to assist at Holy Mass well and profitably?

A. To assist at Holy Mass well and profitably two things are necessary: (1) Modesty of person; (2) Devotion of heart.

Q. In what does modesty of person consist?

A. Modesty of person consists especially in being modestly dressed, in observing silence and recollection, and as far as possible in remaining kneeling, except during the time of the two Gospels which are heard standing.

Q. In hearing Holy Mass which is the best way to practise true devotion?

A. In hearing Holy Mass the best way to practise true devotion is the following:

1. From the very beginning to unite our intention with that of the priest, offering the Holy Sacrifice to God for the ends for which it was instituted.
2. To accompany the priest in each prayer and action of the Sacrifice.
3. To meditate on the passion and death of Jesus Christ and to heartily detest our sins, which have been the cause of them.
4. To go to Communion, or at least to make a spiritual

Communion while the priest communicates.

Q. What is spiritual Communion ?

A. Spiritual Communion is a great desire to be united sacramentally with Jesus Christ, saying, for example : *My Lord Jesus Christ, I desire with my whole heart to be united with Thee now and forever ;* and then make the same acts that are to be made before and after sacramental Communion.

Q. Does the recitation of the Rosary or other prayers during Mass prevent us from hearing it with profit ?

A. The recitation of the Rosary and other prayers during Mass does

not prevent us from hearing it with profit, provided we try as far as possible to follow the parts of the Holy Sacrifice.

Q. Is it advisable to pray for others while assisting at Mass ?

A. Yes it is advisable to pray for others while assisting at Mass ; nay more, the time of Holy Mass is the most suitable of all times to pray for the living and the dead.

Q. What should we do after Mass ?

A. After Mass we should give God thanks for having allowed us to assist at this great Sacrifice, and we should ask pardon for all the faults we may have committed while assisting at it.

Fifteenth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS—ITS ESSENCE

WE now come to explain the Eucharist regarded as a Sacrifice, and in our explanation we shall consider its essence, its principal parts, its purpose, and its fruits. To-day we shall confine our attention to its essence, or in other words, we shall explain how the Mass is a sacrifice.

The Mass is the true and real Sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which is offered each day on our altars under the outward appearances of bread and wine, and which continually represents the Sacrifice of the Cross and applies its saving fruits to our souls. To properly understand this, it will be necessary to enter on certain preliminary explanations regarding the nature of a sacrifice.

There never has been, and there never can be, a religion without some sort of external and visible worship or sacrifice. For, the object of all religion is to honour God by supreme worship, and the most supreme form of worship is precisely sacrifice. Hence it is that to offer sacrifice to the Supreme Being has from the very beginning invariably been regarded as the bounden duty of the human race, and as forming an essential part of the worship due to God. Now, a sacrifice is the visible offering up of some visible thing to God, made by some duly authorized person, to acknowledge, by means of the destruction of, or some similar change in, the thing offered, the supreme dominion of God over all creatures, thereby rendering to Him the supreme homage due to Him alone, and confessing by the action of sacrifice that He is the Lord of life and death, and that we are utterly dependent on Him.

It is easy to call to mind numerous examples. Thus we have the sacrifices offered by Adam, Cain, Abel, Melchisedech, Abraham, Jacob, and of many others who offered up the fruits of the earth to God and consumed them by fire. While under the written Law we find the sacrifices offered by the Jews, who used to slaughter oxen and sheep and other animals in recognition of the honour due to God.

Now, what exactly did they intend to express by this action of burning, killing, destroying, consuming? Simply this: Their action was a public and solemn protestation of their recognition and confession that God is the giver of all good gifts; that He has no need of created things, which are all as nothing in His sight—and hence it

is that in His sight they are destroyed and annihilated ; that God is absolute Master of life and death ; that just as they caused the death or destruction of the thing offered, so were they themselves ready to die and be sacrificed in His service ; and finally, that by their sins they had merited the death or destruction inflicted on the victims offered in their place. Such, then, is the meaning, and such the necessity of sacrifice in general, and of the sacrifices of the Old Law in particular.

But the sacrifices of the Old Law, although prescribed by God Himself, had of themselves no virtue, and could be pleasing to Him only in so far as they prefigured the great Sacrifice which Jesus Christ was to accomplish in His own person on the Cross—the only sacrifice which could worthily honour God and appease divine justice. For since men had become sinners and abominable in His sight, what had they to offer Him that would in any way be worthy of Him and meritorious in His eyes ? The blood of thousands and thousands of animals could not blot out a single sin or adequately satisfy the justice of God. A sacrifice of infinite value was required—as infinite as is the majesty of that God who had been offended by our sins ; and to provide us with such a sacrifice the Son of God deigned to clothe Himself in our flesh and become our Priest and Victim, expiating our sins on the Cross, and enabling us to satisfy divine justice.

This is the great truth expounded by St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews. It is, he said, impossible for sins to be blotted out by the blood of oxen and goats. Hence it is that Jesus Christ on coming into the world said to His Father : “ The sacrifices and holocausts hitherto practised have not been pleasing to Thee ; therefore hast Thou clothed Me with this body ; and now behold I come to offer that body to Thee and to immolate it for sinners ” : *Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not ; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me . . . then said I : Behold I come ; to do Thy will, O Lord . . . In the which will we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once . . . By one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*¹

The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross was, then, a true Sacrifice ; nay it was the one real Sacrifice—the Sacrifice *par excellence*.

First of all it was a *true* Sacrifice. In every true sacrifice there must be four things : God to whom the sacrifice is offered ; the minister or priest who makes the offering ; the victim, or thing, or creature offered ; and the destruction of that victim in recognition of God's supreme dominion. Now these four conditions are perfectly verified

¹ Heb. x. 5, etc.

in the Sacrifice of the Cross. It was offered to God on the altar of the Cross ; the priest who offered it was Jesus Christ ; He, too, was the Victim offered, and offered of His own free will : *He was offered because it was His own will* ;¹ while as for the destruction of the victim, it is enough to read the Gospel account of the Crucifixion. Thus did He, at one and the same time Priest and Victim, pay to the majesty of God the homage and glory due to Him ; expiated the sins of all the world ; and by means of *one single oblation*, according to the words of St. Paul, *hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*.²

It was also the *only* real Sacrifice *par excellence*. The sacrifices that had preceded it were nothing more than shadows and figures of the Sacrifice of the Cross, from which, by anticipation, they derived all their value—they were pleasing to God only in so far as they were offered to Him in union with that of the Cross, and through faith in the Redeemer to come, of whom they were a figure. Hence it is that on the accomplishment of the Sacrifice of the Cross all other sacrifices ceased and were completely abolished, and are no longer lawful.

Is there, then, no sacrifice in the Christian religion ? Has the Sacrifice of the Cross rendered all other sacrifices unnecessary or unlawful ? Yes and no. No ; because, as St. Paul teaches, by that one oblation on the Cross, Christ *perfected for ever them that are sanctified*. But the answer must also be yes.

Sacrifice, as we have seen, is an essential element in every religion. The Christian religion must, then, have its own sacrifice—a sacrifice as perfect as the religion of which it forms a part. Such in fact was foretold in the Old Testament in several prophecies. One such prophecy stands out before all others. It is recorded in the book of the Prophet Malachias and is as follows :—

Almighty God, after having reproached the growing impiety of the Jews, who were His chosen people, and from whom He had been accustomed to receive sacrifice, goes on to say : *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will not receive a gift from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation*.³ The clear and obvious meaning of all this is that the Jewish sacrifices were to cease, and be replaced by a pure oblation—a new sacrifice—which was to be offered up to God in every nation and in every place from the rising to the going down of the sun—not merely amongst the Jews, but amongst the Gentiles also ; not merely in Palestine, but all over the world. The sacrifice here foretold was, then, to replace the Jewish sacrifices. Was it, then, pre-

¹ Is. liii. 7.² Heb. x. 14.³ Mal. i. 10.

cisely the Sacrifice of the Cross? No; for the Sacrifice of the Cross was offered only once, and in one place, while the new sacrifice was to be offered everywhere, and every day. Now the Jewish religion and sacrifices have disappeared, and where is this new sacrifice that was to replace them? In the whole Christian religion there is only one sacrifice, only one such solemn act, corresponding to this prophecy, and that sacrifice is, as you know, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass—that pure oblation, offered to God in every nation and in every place from the rising of the sun to its setting, and substituted by Christ our Lord in place of the sacrifices of the Old Law.

This Sacrifice Christ Himself instituted at the Last Supper on the very eve of His death. As we shall see later on, the essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass consists in the separate consecration of the bread and wine. Now at the Last Supper our Saviour truly and really performed this separate consecration of bread and wine into His body and blood; and therefore we say that at the Last Supper Christ offered up the Sacrifice of the Mass. Moreover, in the Gospel account of the Last Supper we read that the words used by Christ were: *This is My blood which is shed for you; this is My body which is given for you—which is broken for you.* But neither at that time, nor indeed until the next day, was there any real effusion or shedding of blood; the effusion, then, of which He spoke could only be mystical, that is to say, He offered Himself up in sacramental forms—His body under the appearance of bread, and His blood under the appearance of wine—both presented in a sacrificial state, that is to say, the blood separate from the body, just as it was to be in all reality next day on the Cross. In His action at the Last Supper, He represented Himself as the mystic Victim offered for all mankind. And offered not once alone, but to be offered to the very end. For He immediately commanded His Apostles and their successors to do precisely what He had done, that is, to consecrate and offer His body and blood mystically under the appearances of bread and wine, in remembrance and commemoration of His passion and death: *Do this for a commemoration of Me*; or as St. Paul explains it, He commanded them by that mystic oblation *to show forth His death till His second coming.* Thus, at the Last Supper, as you will see, He both celebrated the Eucharistic Sacrifice Himself, and commanded the pastors of His Church to do precisely the same until the end of time—until His second coming.

And if we compare the Sacrifice of the Mass with other sacrifices, and especially with that of the Cross, we find it is wanting in nothing that goes to constitute a true and proper sacrifice—neither in victim, nor in priest, nor in altar, nor in oblation to God alone, nor in instrument of immolation, nor in change or destruction of victim.

The *Victim* that is offered up is Jesus Christ—His body and blood under the outward form and mystic appearances of bread and wine : *This is My body which is offered for you ; this is My blood which is shed for you.*

The *altar* is present before the eyes.

The *priest* is also at hand—it is Jesus Christ Himself acting through the outward ministry of the lawfully ordained priests of His Church who officiate in His name, He being chief and principal Priest in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. For Jesus Christ is a Priest—He is the Chief Priest of the New Law. True, indeed, no human hand was ever imposed in consecration upon His sacred head, no earthly unction was ever poured over Him. It was God Himself who said to Him : *Thou art a Priest for ever*, thus consecrating Him the priest of the human race, to govern and teach man in all that pertains to God ; to offer up to the adorable Trinity, in the name of the human race and for its salvation and happiness, a sacrifice that should not only take away sin, but should also be a truly worthy act of homage, adoration, thanksgiving and prayer.

It was in virtue of this ordination that He instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass—celebrated the first Sacrifice of the New Law, and commanded that it should unceasingly be repeated to the end of time ; and by the same virtue He delegated just as much of His priestly office and power as He pleased to those whom He made His visible representatives and substitutes, commanding them to do as He had done, not indeed in their own name or by their own power, but in His name and by His power as His visible ministers, and as the representatives of His Person and priestly office. When, therefore, the priest on the altar comes to the consecration, he speaks and acts, not in his own name nor on his own authority, but in the name and Person of Christ. He does not say : *This is the body of Christ : This is the blood of Christ ;* but he says in the Person of Christ : *This is My body : This is My blood.* In the Sacrifice of the Mass, then, Jesus Christ as well as being Victim is also Priest. “Who is the priest,” says St. Augustine, “but that one Priest who entered into the holy of holies ? Who is the priest but that one Priest, who is both Priest and Victim, who when He found nothing clean and pure enough in this wide world to offer to the Father in sacrifice, offered Himself ? ”

Now, what is the *instrument* of the Sacrifice of the Mass ? How is the Sacrifice accomplished ? A sacrifice, as we have seen, is effected by the destruction or change of some object, and hence demands a suitable instrument of that change or destruction. In the case of living things a knife or sword was used ; in other cases fire, and so on ; and in one case we know the instrument was the wood of the Cross.

But in the Sacrifice of the Mass, neither knife nor sword, neither fire nor wood is required; the only instrument used being the words ordained by Jesus Christ—words which do the work of the sword. When a living victim was offered up in sacrifice under the Old Law, the immolation was effected by separating its flesh and blood. So also when Jesus Christ offered himself up in Sacrifice on the altar of the Cross, the immolation was accomplished by the separation of body and blood. But after the resurrection, now that His sacred Humanity has become glorious, immortal, and impassible, the separation of body and blood can only take place in a mystic manner, the words of consecration becoming, so to say, a sword by which a mystic effusion of His blood is effected as a result of the separate consecration of bread and wine. Thus in virtue of the words of consecration of the bread, the body alone is present under the appearances of bread, and in virtue of the words of consecration of the wine, the blood alone is present under the appearances of wine; in other words, in virtue of the words of consecration, the body and blood of our Lord are mystically and eucharistically separated, and hence represent mystically His real death on the Cross.

From all this it should be clear that the Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is offered to the same God; the Priest is the same—Jesus Christ; the Victim is the same—Jesus Christ; and the immolation is effected in both cases by the separation of body and blood; the only difference being that in the one case the separation was bloody and real—in the other, it is unbloody and mystic; that is to say the Sacrifice of the Mass differs from the Sacrifice of the Cross in the manner of offering, which is unbloody.

All this is summed up in the declaration of the Council of Trent which says: "Although in accomplishing our redemption, Jesus Christ offered Himself only once on the altar of the Cross, yet in order to leave to the Church, His spouse, a visible sacrifice representing that offered by Him on the Cross; in order to perpetuate its memory to the end of time; and in order to apply its saving virtue for the remission of sins, He at the Last Supper offered to His Father His body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, and at the same time He conferred the power of offering it under the same symbols on His Apostles whom He constituted priests of the New Testament."

But as well as being a real Sacrifice, the Mass is a Sacrifice of infinite value, by reason of the infinite merit of the Victim who is offered and sacrificed. Ah! there is an immeasurable difference between this Sacrifice and the sacrifices of the Old Law in which oxen, lambs, doves, or the fruits of the earth were offered up, and in which the priests who offered them were only poor sinners; while in the

Sacrifice of the Mass that which is offered is Jesus Christ whole and entire, true God and true man—His body and His blood, His soul and His infinitely precious life are sacrificed ; while the priest who offers them is also Jesus Christ Himself, the only-begotten Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, the Saint of saints, the most pleasing object in the eyes of God that ever was or ever can be. Collect together all the merits of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints, the purity of the virgins, the sufferings of the martyrs, the penances of the anchorites, the labours of the Apostles ; and all these added together could not give as much glory to God as He derives from a single Mass.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that this Sacrifice embraces in itself, and in an infinitely admirable manner, the virtue and the value of all the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, the very multiplicity and variety of which demonstrated clearly their intrinsic insufficiency and inefficacy. Yes, the Sacrifice of the Mass alone serves as a holocaust, as a peace-offering, as a eucharistic sacrifice, as a sacrifice of impetration, as we shall see later on when we come to explain the four principal fruits of this divine Sacrifice.

In the meantime, from what has been already explained, recognize the high esteem in which you should hold this divine Sacrifice, which is the most august mystery, the greatest treasure, which our religion possesses ; and remember the profound sentiments of veneration and devotion with which you should assist at it.

If the Sacrifice of the Mass is a representation and a renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, nothing more than this can be said. As often as you assist at it picture to yourselves that you stand on the hill of Calvary, and are spectators and witnesses of the death of Jesus Christ ; and with the eyes of faith contemplate Him agonizing and dying for you. Oh ! if conscious of that great mystery you happened to be present at that bloody tragedy, with what sentiments of faith, respect, thanksgiving, love, and compunction would you not be penetrated ? Such, precisely, are the sentiments which you should bring with you to the foot of the altar, if you desire to show yourselves grateful to God for the gift of so precious a Victim, and to derive thence abundant fruits of sanctification and salvation.

Sixteenth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE FRUITS OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

IN explaining the essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass we saw that it is not merely a commemoration—a remembrance—but an express representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross ; that it is even the self-same Sacrifice as that of the Cross. For it has the same Victim ; and the same Priest who offers Himself by the hands of His ministers—Jesus Christ who offered Himself on the altar of the Cross ; the only difference being that the Sacrifice of the Cross was a bloody sacrifice, while the Sacrifice of the Mass is unbloody. In the former the soul was separated from the body by real death ; in the latter it is separated by mystic death. In the former, the Saviour purchased the merits of our redemption ; in the latter these merits are applied to our souls.

Though this should suffice to show us the infinite value and worth of the Sacrifice of the Mass, yet to make it still more clear, I purpose to explain the four great fruits of this divine Sacrifice, which correspond to the four ends for which it is offered, and which for us are four great duties we owe to God : that is to say (1) To honour Him as much as His infinite greatness deserves ; (2) To appease Him, as much as His divine justice, which we have offended, demands ; (3) To thank Him as much as His infinite goodness requires ; (4) To pray to Him as much as our great need necessitates. Of ourselves we cannot pay those obligations, but we can perfectly satisfy for them by the Sacrifice of the Mass.

I. The first duty we owe is to honour the Divine Majesty with the honour it deserves. It is enough to say that we are God's creatures. Compelled as we are to recognize that we do not derive our existence from ourselves, we are bound to acknowledge that it is God who has brought us forth from nothing, who guides and sustains our being without ceasing. If, then, according to every law, the inferior owes homage and obedience to his superior, the slave to his master, the subject to his sovereign, how much more the creature to his Creator ? And this homage should be all the greater in proportion to the greatness and the dignity of the person to whom it is rendered. Now, God being a Lord of infinite greatness and majesty, to honour Him worthily infinite honour and homage would be necessary. But

how can honour such as this be rendered by us who are nothing but lowly, abject slaves? If, according to the expression of Holy Scripture, all creatures are as nothing before Him: *All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing*¹—our deepest homage does not merit even a glance from a majesty so great. Nay, even were creatures to annihilate and destroy themselves before Him, they could never satisfy the great debt they owe, since there is no proportion between our lowliness and nothingness, and God's infinite majesty and greatness.

But, Jesus Christ be thanked, who has provided us with a means far exceeding and surpassing all the homages of all existing or possible creatures of honouring the sovereign majesty of God as much as it deserves. That means is the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is called a Sacrifice of *infinite honour*, because in it an infinite Person humiliates Himself to honour infinite greatness. And in truth, what do we believe is done by Jesus Christ when He becomes present on the altar? On the altar Jesus Christ, equal in dignity to His Father, offers Himself to the Father in an act of absolute submission—becomes humiliated, annihilated even so far as to assume the lowly appearances of bread and wine. On the altar, He recognizes and adores the sovereign greatness of God, and as a proof of His ardent desire to honour and glorify Him with the most profound homage He offers His whole Self—His body, His blood, His Humanity and His Divinity; and renewing the Sacrifice of His own life made by Him on the Cross for the glory of God, He shows Himself still ready to suffer a thousand deaths should His divine Father so demand, to honour and glorify Him ever more and more. What object could be more pleasing in the sight of God? Let us, then, unite our humiliations to those of Jesus Christ; let us through Him render infinite homage to God—a homage infinitely greater than if we were in that moment to sacrifice our very life in protestation of His sovereignty and our own nothingness.

2. Another duty we owe to God is *to appease Divine Justice* that has been offended by our sins, and *to give Him adequate satisfaction*.

That God has just reason to be angry with us, exterminate and destroy us, will be clear to each one who merely reflects on the number and gravity of the offences continually committed against Him in every part of the Christian world—evil-speaking, fraud, injustice, betrayal, vengeance, sacrilege, lewdness, and scandals without number or restraint. But how can we be capable of appeasing God, and satisfying His justice thus horribly outraged? Were there even only one sin in question, being as it is an insult, an offence offered to a God of infinite greatness by a poor and lowly creature, it is of its very

¹ Is. xl. 17.

nature so great an evil that it is impossible to repair it adequately. Not all the sufferings of the martyrs, not all the penances of the anchorites, not all the labours of the Apostles suffice to offer adequate satisfaction for it. Thus then should we be ever exposed to the anger of Divine justice which would ever be ready to take vengeance on our sins.

And thus it would truly be, had Jesus Christ not intervened as our Mediator to appease His divine Father, and to preserve us from the thunderbolts launched against us: *He is the propitiation for our sins.*¹ Now, this He accomplishes precisely in the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is hence called a Sacrifice of Propitiation; because therein Jesus Christ offers Himself in Person to His Father, and asks pardon and mercy of Him for us, just as on the Cross He asked pardon for His executioners: *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*² And very often this suffices to disarm the anger of God and make the avenging sword fall from His hands. Woe to us if we have not this Victim of propitiation ready! How often would the Lord, provoked by our sins, devastate the earth by war, famine, pestilence, earthquakes and floods? If God to-day shows greater clemency to us than He showed in the days of old, notwithstanding the fact that sins increase each day in number and gravity; if He does not renew in our case the terrible examples of rigour and severity which He often gave to the world even for the sins of a single individual, we owe it to His only Son humiliated on our altars. At sight of that Son God forgets His anger and is appeased—Jesus Christ is the rainbow of peace dissipating the clouds and storms gathered over our heads: *He is a propitiation for our sins.*

But this Sacrifice is propitiatory, not only because it appeases Divine justice and suspends the chastisements we deserve; it is also propitiatory in this sense, that it possesses the power of obtaining us pardon of our sins both as to their guilt and as to the punishment due to them. And the reason is, that in the Sacrifice of the Mass is renewed in mystic manner that real effusion and offering of that precious blood concerning which Jesus Christ Himself said: *It shall be shed for the remission of sins.*

It is, then, satisfactory, first of all with regard to the guilt of sin, not indeed in the sense that it remits our sins immediately and directly, for this is the proper effect of the sacrament of Penance, but in the sense indicated by the Council of Trent: "By this oblation God is appeased, and remits even serious sins by conceding the grace and gift of Penance." That is to say, the Sacrifice of the Mass remits our sins in the sense that in itself it possesses the virtue of obtaining for

¹ 1 John ii. 2.

² Luke xxiii. 34.

us the grace of conversion and contrition—a virtue not strictly possessed by other good works. To those who assist at Mass, that often happens which happened to the executioners, of whom it is related that after their horrible crime they went down from Calvary penetrated with sorrow and striking their breasts. Thus also will the blindest and most obstinate sinners, if they assist at Mass with the proper dispositions, be touched interiorly with divine grace, and strongly stimulated to cleanse themselves from their faults and return once more to God.

But as well as being an efficacious remedy for delivering us from the guilt of our sins, the Mass is also a rich treasure enabling us to pay the debts of punishment we may have contracted by sin. You will remember that even though sin is pardoned, all the punishment due on account of it is not always remitted, but that there still remains a temporal punishment to be undergone either in this life or in the life to come. You will also remember that our good works, our alms, our prayers, our penances do not as a rule suffice to acquit us of our debt, because though they have a certain value, they nevertheless are not equal to the debt we have contracted with God. What, then, are we to do if we desire to avoid remaining His debtors eternally? Here also Jesus Christ has furnished us with a ready and safe means, handing over to us for our use the infinite treasure of the merits which He offered to His divine Father, and which we can offer in payment of all our debts through means of the Sacrifice of the Mass in which He has collocated that treasure of His infinite merits.

Nay, the treasure of these merits is so abundant that you can use them not only for yourselves, but also for the souls departed, and hence it is that the Sacrifice of the Mass is said to be *propitiatory for the living and the dead*. True, indeed, the souls in Purgatory are no longer in a position to acquire any merit of themselves, and hence cannot of themselves have recourse to the merits of Jesus Christ; yet by God's merciful dispensation they can benefit by the application of these merits effected by means of us, if we offer the holy Sacrifice with the intention of obtaining them either some relief or full and complete liberation from their sufferings. This is the surest means of affording them succour—nay, it is often the only means. For if you are in mortal sin, and do or try to do any other good work for the relief of the souls in Purgatory, you have no certainty that you really succeed in your purpose; while it is certain that the Sacrifice of the Mass will help them, no matter what your state—even were you in the state of actual enmity with God. The reason of this difference is that in your other good works which you offer, God takes account of your merits and dispositions; and if you are in enmity

with Him, He cannot accept as good for others the works which are of no avail even for yourselves. While, on the other hand, in the Sacrifice of the Mass He neither considers your unworthiness, not that of the celebrant, but only the merits of the Victim which is offered to Him, that is, Jesus Christ; hence by this offering you can always afford useful help to the souls in Purgatory. Let us now briefly consider the other two duties we owe.

3. The third duty we owe to God is to *thank Him as much as He deserves for the benefits* He has bestowed on us. Infinite, indeed, are the obligations we are under towards Him for the ceaseless and inestimable benefits which He has given us—benefits general and particular, both natural and supernatural, both of nature and of grace. Turn where we will we are surrounded by His benefits—all that we have and all that we are comes from Him. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?*¹ We are, therefore, strictly bound to show Him our gratitude. But what suitable recompense or equivalent can we offer Him for all His benefits? *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things He hath rendered to me?*² The unreserved offering of ourselves, our heart, our liberty, our goods, our very life itself, would be always infinitely less than the least of the benefits He has conferred on us in His infinite love. Thus we should be always compelled to live ungrateful to Him, were we abandoned and left to ourselves.

But here, also, God has provided for our poverty and misery by the Sacrifice of the Mass which is hence called *Eucharistic*, that is, a Sacrifice of supreme thanksgiving. By means of this Sacrifice we are enabled to make an offering to God equal to all the benefits and graces we have received from His divine liberality. For in offering the true body and blood of Jesus Christ we offer Him a gift of infinite value—a gift which of itself is worth more than all the other gifts we have received, since it is God Himself that we offer.

4. Finally, our fourth and last duty is to *pray to God for all the graces and blessings we stand in need of* owing to our extreme poverty and indigence. We stand in continual need of divine graces for the soul as well as for the body, for time as well as for eternity; and although God sometimes grants them to us without our asking them, nevertheless He grants them, as a rule, only in response to our prayers: *Ask and it shall be given to you*³—thus willing us to recognize His supreme dominion over us and our total dependence on Him. But how could we dare to present ourselves before God, and how could we hope He would hear our prayers, if of ourselves we deserved only to be rejected and punished by Him? Yet such is really the case;

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.² Ps. cxv. 12.³ Matt. vii. 7.

but fear not, for if our prayers have of themselves no value, we still possess an all-powerful means of rendering them most precious and so efficacious that the divine Majesty not only cannot reject them, but cannot even refuse to hear them. And what is that means? It is the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is on that account called a Sacrifice of *Impetration*, that is to say, capable of obtaining for us all the graces we stand in need of. And how can it be otherwise? Has not Jesus Christ told us that if we ask the Father anything in His name He will infallibly grant it to us: *If you ask the Father anything in My name He will give it to you.*¹ But in the Sacrifice of the Mass we ask in His name in such a way that to move God to hear us we present to Him the merits and the very Person of His only Son—a gift incomparably greater than any request we can ask. Nay, in the holy Mass it is precisely Jesus Christ Himself who intercedes for us; He it is who undertakes our cause, becomes our advocate, presents our supplications to His Father, enforcing them with all the weight of His infinite merits and intercession: *Jesus Christ who died . . . who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*² Now what motive can be more powerful and more efficacious to move God, and induce Him to hear us? If we of ourselves merit nothing, He merits all from His Father. Hence it is that at Mass the Church prays for all our needs, both of body and soul, both public and private.

Such, then, is the worth and excellence of the Sacrifice of the Mass—such the inestimable blessings it contains; while through its means we are enabled abundantly to discharge all the debts we have contracted towards God.

Summing up in a few words all I have already said, this is what we shall find: We are God's creatures—creatures loaded with His blessings, creatures often ungrateful to Him and rebellious against Him, creatures who always stand in need of Him. Hence arises the necessity, the duty, of honouring Him, thanking Him, approaching Him, beseeching Him. But the infinite distance between us and Him renders us vile and contemptible in His sight, and it would be impossible for us to discharge these duties if He had not furnished us with the assistance of this divine Host which is offered and sacrificed each day for us on the altar. It alone can and does render us truly capable of all. How many, then, and how great are the obligations we owe Him for having given us so precious a Victim, with the help of which we are enabled to discharge worthily all the duties we owe to God?

Now, are all the precious fruits I have explained up to this really partaken of by all those who assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

¹ John xvi. 23.

² Rom. viii. 34.

Would to God it were so ! For some, the Sacrifice is useless and fruitless, not indeed through the Victim's fault, but through their own neglect and malice. Thus the sacraments are, as we know, most efficacious in themselves ; yet are they not often not only useless, but harmful ? We must say the same of the most august Sacrifice of the altar. In the eyes of God, Jesus Christ is always a pure, holy, acceptable, and infinitely precious Victim ; but He cannot operate in us without our help and co-operation. The outward offering of Jesus Christ on our altars, all precious as it is in itself, produces no fruit in us if we do not add thereto the interior sacrifice of our hearts, if we do not on our part enter into the dispositions with which He offered Himself to His Father.

Hence it will be highly useful to point out the best method of hearing Mass, and of deriving therefrom all the fruits it can confer. Accordingly this will be the subject of our next instruction.

Seventeenth Instruction on the Sacraments

THE MANNER OF HEARING MASS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HEARING IT FREQUENTLY

FROM what has been already said on the essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass, and on the fruits to be derived from it, I draw two conclusions which will form the subject of to-day's instruction :—

1. The best and most practical manner of hearing it ; and
2. The importance of hearing it as frequently as we can, even on those days on which there is no obligation of hearing it.

1. Regarding the first point, although the Sacrifice of the Mass is of infinite value, it nevertheless can through our own fault be made, to a certain extent, almost useless to us, as happens only too often in the case of the sacraments. It is, therefore, highly important to ensure its effects, by hearing it in the best possible manner. And what is that manner ? You can easily divine it from the doctrine already laid down. If the Sacrifice of our altars is a commemoration and a renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, even though a mystic and unbloody one, and if Jesus Christ has instituted it to perpetuate in our midst the memory of His holy passion and death, it is clear that the best manner of hearing it is to occupy ourselves holily with thoughts of the sufferings endured for us by Jesus Christ.

And from the very outset as a first preparation, be well persuaded that a lively faith should accompany you on your way to holy Mass, which you should regard as the greatest and most sublime act of our religion, calling to mind that in a certain way you are ascending the Hill of Calvary, and are spectators at the crucifixion and death of Christ. Faith such as this is highly necessary to assist thereat without distraction of soul, coldness of heart, levity and want of recollection—all of which not only deprive us of the fruits of the Sacrifice, but often render us guilty of transgressing the precept of hearing Mass, if not even of sometimes profaning this great mystery.

In the next place, it is highly desirable to accompany the priest throughout the whole celebration of the Sacrifice, and offer it to God with him. For it is not the priest alone whom you see on the altar who offers the Sacrifice of the Mass, but along with him are associated all those present, each one according to his degree. Hence it is that

the priest calls the Sacrifice, which he offers, not only his own Sacrifice, but also the Sacrifice of all those who assist thereat, and that is why he invites the people to unite themselves with him and accompany him through the holy oblation, and also why he uses terms and language common both to himself and the people.

These preliminary observations being borne in mind, it will now be necessary to observe that to occupy yourselves during the time of holy Mass with the passion and death of Christ is by no means a practice beyond your capacity. For who is there who does not know the history of the sufferings of our Lord? Now we should call these sufferings to mind not only on Good Friday, but each and every day, and especially when assisting at the divine Sacrifice. This is why the Church has aimed at facilitating meditation thereon, by the care she has had to represent, by means of the various ceremonies of Mass, the principal circumstances of the passion and death of our Saviour. All is mystical and significant in the ceremonies of this divine Sacrifice. A few words will suffice to show this.

When you see the priest bowed down at the foot of the altar and making confession of his sins, picture to yourself Jesus Christ praying in the garden of Olives, loaded with the sins of all the world, and then ask pardon of your sins in a humble confession which you should also make in His presence. It would indeed be desirable that all those who assist at the divine Sacrifice should be in a state of grace; but those who are in a state of sin should not on that account imagine they are forbidden to be present, and much less should they imagine that by being present they commit a new sin. For such a doctrine is heretical, contrary to the precept of the Church, and deprives the sinner of a powerful motive for his conversion. Still although the state of sin does not exclude your participation in the divine Sacrifice, you are bound by every reason to recognize, in unison with the priest at the Confiteor, the deplorable state of your soul before God, and to show that you at least conceive a sincere desire of amending your life; and this with the object of removing the greatest obstacle to the fruit of the Sacrifice of the Mass—which obstacle is hardness of heart, indolence, and insensibility to the state of sin.

Then when the priest goes to the different sides of the altar for the Epistle and Gospel, picture Jesus Christ led before the different tribunals of Annas, Caiphas, Pilate and Herod; and during the prayers said in silence by the priest, call to mind the snares and plots of the Scribes and Pharisees against the life of our Lord.

Leaving aside, for the sake of brevity, a number of reflections that could be made, and confining my attention to that which is more important and more necessary, the principal part of the Mass is that

which extends from the Consecration to the Communion of the priest. When the priest, bowing down over the Host and chalice, pronounces the divine and all-powerful words, then heaven is opened, Jesus Christ in person becomes present under the appearances of bread and wine, and, surrounded by thousands of angels invisibly present to adore Him, offers once more to His eternal Father the great offering He made on Calvary. The elevation of the Host is a figure of Jesus Christ raised up on the Cross, and that of the chalice represents to us His precious blood which He poured forth for our redemption. Moments such as these should be the most precious of our lives.

And then we should offer that adorable Victim, there present, for the four ends of which I have already spoken, and for which the divine Sacrifice was instituted—to glorify God, appease His anger, bless His goodness, and obtain His mercy, and beseech the graces of which we stand in need or which we desire for ourselves or for others. During Mass you can, indeed, offer other prayers, but you should never forget to make this offering; and were you to do nothing else during the whole course of Mass but to repeat this offering, it is an excellent manner of hearing Mass, and a practice which is not above the capacity of even the most ignorant.

But in order that this offering may be pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves, it is necessary that it should not be a mere material offering, or an offering only of the lips; but it should be made in union with Jesus Christ and with the dispositions with which He offered Himself to His Father. Let our hearts, then, be penetrated and filled with a keen desire of glorifying God, humble compunction at the sight of our sins, sincere feelings of gratitude for the mercies and blessings which God has shown us, and finally with an ardent desire of obtaining His graces, united with a feeling of our own unworthiness.

Animated by these dispositions, let us offer to God this pleasing and holy Victim which will supply for our own insufficiency and powerlessness to honour and thank Him worthily, to appease Him and merit His graces. And let us say: *Look, O Lord, on the face of Thy Christ*¹—do not, O Lord, consider my demerits and my unworthiness, but consider only the Person of Thy only Son here present, and in consideration of Him be merciful and favourable to us. If we regard ourselves alone, we are miserable, we are sinners, and unworthy to raise our eyes towards heaven to implore Thy mercy; but in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass we become, so to say, depositories and owners of this divine Victim which is placed at our disposal to be offered by us to God, and hence full of holy courage and boldness we can turn

¹ Ps. lxxxiii. 10.

to Him and say to Him : “ *Look, O Lord, on the face of Thy Christ*—that which I offer Thee is the body and blood of Thy only Son. But this body and blood are now mine—all mine ; and in offering them to Thee I am confident of being able to give Thee greater glory than I have taken from Thee by my numberless sins ; of being able to thank Thee properly for all the countless blessings I have received and still receive from Thy hands ; of being able to obtain not only from Thy mercy, but also from Thy justice, all the graces I stand in need of—graces Thou wilt grant me in consideration of the price I offer Thee, which is nothing less than the immaculate body and precious blood of Thy divine Son. Of myself I merit nothing ; but this Victim of redemption who gives Himself wholly to me in this Sacrifice merits all from Thee—*Look, O Lord, on the face of Thy Christ*.

“ Accept, then, O eternal Father, this holy oblation in recognition of Thy sovereign greatness and my nothingness : *My substance is as nothing before Thee ;*¹ *O God, Thou knowest my foolishness ;*² *Thou knowest that we are dust.*³ Ah, how have dust and ashes such as this dared to rebel against Thee ? Pardon me my sins and my blindness. Accept this Sacrifice in satisfaction for the countless sins of my life—how numerous they are, and how far have I strayed from Thee, my last end ? *If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it ?*⁴ I have no other refuge than the infinite merits of this Victim who sacrifices Himself on the altar for me ; through these merits give me a full knowledge of my sins, a sincere detestation of them, the grace to shun them and to avoid all occasions and dangers of committing them. Accept it in thanksgiving for all the blessings Thou hast granted me, and especially for the infinite patience and goodness with which Thou hast borne with me, and bearest with me still. Oh ! let not Thy patience be turned into an increase of my sins, but let me use it to repair all the mistakes of my past life.”

Finally, let us glance at the various needs by which we are surrounded, and let us ask of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, the graces that are necessary for ourselves and for others. Let us ask them in the first place for ourselves, and let us ask not only for temporal blessings of health, prosperity, and success in our undertakings, but also for spiritual blessings, such, for instance, as the sacrifice of a favourite passion which is leading to our ruin ; resistance, against temptations ; flight from sin and from dangerous occasions ; the grace of God and holy perseverance. Then let us ask also for our relatives, our friends, our benefactors ; and let us especially recommend to God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, the poor, sick, and dying ; those who are in sorrow and tribulation ; those to whom we

¹ Ps. xxxviii. 6.² Ps. lxxviii. 6.³ Ps. cii. 14.⁴ Ps. cxxix. 3.

may have been the occasion of sin and ruin by our scandal ; as also those who have injured us or wish us harm ; and in general, for all the needs of our Church, and our country ; for the just, the impenitent, heretics, infidels, and all Christians living and dead.

Such, then, should be your principal occupation up to the Communion of the priest, which represents the burial of our Lord. If you do not communicate sacramentally, do so at least spiritually, desiring to receive Jesus Christ within you, and beseeching Him to make you a sharer in His divine Spirit. And, finally, when the priest gives the last blessing to the people, beseech the Father Eternal, through love of His divine Son, to bless you and protect you from every evil during the day.

This seems to be the most suitable and the most salutary way to hear Mass. It does not hinder you from saying other prayers, but you can always say them while attending in some way to the points I have referred to. Those who know how to read will easily be able to find books which contain excellent methods and which may profitably be followed ; while as for those who cannot read, it suffices for them to assist at Mass with lively faith in Jesus Christ crucified and with the desire of participating in the four fruits of the divine Sacrifice.

2. It now remains for me to recommend you to assist frequently at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass—it will, of course, be at once understood that I speak only of those days on which you are not bound by the laws of the Church to assist at Mass. Even though you cling tenaciously to other devotions and pious practices which are all equally a matter of choice, I should be sorry to see you omit that which is first, greatest, the most important, and which justly merits preference before all others. After all I have said on the infinite, inestimable value of the Sacrifice of the Mass, can it be that a law of the Church is required to compel you to assist at it ? Will it not rather suffice for you to be assured by faith that this act of our religion is the most acceptable to God, and the most advantageous to ourselves ?

And yet, how many there are who restrict themselves to hearing Mass barely on days of obligation, and who regard it as a tiresome burthen even then, and who would never dream of hearing Mass on a week-day ! Enter the church on a week-day, and you find it almost empty during Mass. You see the streets, the squares, the places of amusement and business crowded with the idle and unoccupied, while the church is almost deserted. What a bad return is not this for the love of Jesus Christ towards us, and for the ineffable gift He presents for us on the altar ? He sacrifices Himself for us to His divine Father, He offers to Him the honours due to Him by us, the payment of our

debts, and His prayers for help in our miseries ; while we are insensible to all these tender proofs of His love, and make no more account of them than if we knew nothing at all about them. Now is not this in all truth a disregard of the greatest of all God's blessings ?

If God had ordained that the divine Sacrifice could be celebrated only in one place, or very rarely, such, for instance, as once a year, what desire should we not have, what trouble should we not take, to be present at it, remembering the infinite value faith tells us it possesses ?

And what are the excuses we make to ourselves for not assisting frequently at Mass ? For the most part there is no other reason than that of indolence, laziness or inactivity. An excessive love of our own ease, a certain dislike to being disturbed or inconvenienced, either by the state of the weather, or by the distance to be traversed, suffices to detain us. But one would like to ask whether these motives would be strong enough to keep us away from amusements, or pleasure parties. Rather would we not haste to be present, even at the cost of some inconvenience not only in person, but in purse ? Is there not in this contrast something to make us blush if we possess but a spark of faith ?

But, someone may say, there is no obligation. I grant it ; but let us understand one another. It is true there is no particular obligation to hear Mass on week-days ; but there is always the general obligation binding on everyone, to employ time well, do good works, use, as far as possible, the means of salvation mercifully afforded us by God—all of which amounts to this, that when able you should not neglect assisting at Mass, which is the best of all possible ways of using time, the holiest work, and the most efficacious means of salvation.

I will furthermore add—and bear this well in mind—that he is not a good Christian who discusses and examines everything with God, disputes with Him, and refuses to do anything for Him to which he is not strictly bound. In conduct such as this we cannot recognize the true character of piety, fervour, and devotion.

But someone else may say : I really should not fail to assist regularly at Mass if I had only time ; but my occupations are so many and so pressing that I have not a single free moment of my own. I answer that time can always be found if you really want to find it. How many others there are who are much more occupied than you and yet can find time ? How many poor artisans and labourers go to daily Mass at a very early hour, though pressed by the claims and calls of their daily labour ? It is not, then, the time that is oftenest wanting, but the will.

Judge yourselves impartially and you will see whether you cannot

defer some of your business to another time, whether you cannot rise a little earlier and take a little less sleep, which is perhaps too long already, and finally whether you cannot manage to regulate the duties of the day in such a way as to leave time for this great act of our religion.

Let it not enter your mind that in devoting a little time to hearing Mass you are injuring your temporal interests or at least are subtracting a certain amount of time from those interests. You would grossly deceive yourself were you to think thus, for so far from being a loss it is rather a gain for you. I have already shown—and the point is of faith—that the Sacrifice of the Mass is a supreme Sacrifice of impetration for every blessing both spiritual and temporal. Far, then, from being opposed to your interests, assistance at Mass will be a source of blessing and prosperity for you.

And so it is. Nay, the maxim laid down by our Lord applies here : *Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all things else shall be added unto you.* Let your first and principal business be the spiritual interests of your soul—cultivate the practice of true devotion, amongst which must be numbered the hearing of daily Mass ; and God, in whose hands are all things here below, and from whom all prosperity depends, will take care of all your interests, and will even find a way to reward you temporally.

But leaving aside temporal concerns, which should neither be the only nor the principal object of our desires, might we not rather look higher and strive to obtain those blessings which can render us eternally happy ? Sincere sorrow for our sins, which is as necessary as it is rare, pardon of our faults, the grace of God, aversion to sin, victory over the evil habits we may have contracted, the acquisition of Christian virtues, perseverance in good works, a death holy and precious in the sight of the Lord—this is what we ought principally to desire, and this is precisely why I exhort you to hear Mass frequently, because it is the most efficacious means of obtaining these blessings.

As often, then, as this devotion is at all compatible with the circumstances in which you find yourselves, do not omit to practise it. Doing this, you will render the greatest possible glory to God, and you provide for all your own needs. It will be helpful to you during life, but especially helpful in the hour of death—because in that supreme moment God visibly protects and assists, by a special assistance, all those who during life were devout to the divine Sacrifice. More than this I could not say ; it is for you to profit by it.

